

AM Genesis 25:19-34 & 27:1-28:4 Jacob lives up to his name

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- [0 : 00] to the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 25, Genesis 25. We shall read at verse 19.
- Genesis 25 verse 19. These are the generations of Isaac, Abram's son. Abram fathered Isaac and Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan Aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.
- And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her and she said, If it is thus, why is this happening to me?
- So she went to inquire of the Lord and the Lord said to her, For two nations are in your womb and two peoples from within you shall be divided. The one shall be stronger than the other.
- The older shall serve the younger. When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak.
- [1 : 21] So they called his name Esau. Afterwards his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel. So his name was called Jacob. Isaac was six years old when she bore them.
- When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field. While Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game.
- But Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, Let me eat some of that red stew for I am exhausted.
- Therefore his name was called Edom. Jacob said, Sell me your birthright now. Esau said, I am about to die.
- Of what use is a birthright to me? Jacob said, Swear to me now. So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.
- [2 : 32] Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew. And he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.
- Let's move on to chapter 27. When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau, his older son, and said to him, My son.
- And he answered, Here I am. He said, Behold, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, and prepare for me delicious food such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.
- Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau.
- Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food that I may eat it and bless you before the Lord before I die. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you.

[3 : 59] Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats so that I may prepare for them delicious food for your father such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies.

But Jacob said to Rebekah, his mother, Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him, and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing.

His mother said to him, Let your curse be on me, my son. Only obey my voice and go. Bring them to me. So he went and took them and brought them to his mother.

And his mother prepared delicious food such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau, her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob, her younger son.

And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

[5 : 13] So he went in to his father and said, My father. And he said, Here I am. Who are you, my son?

Jacob said to his father, I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.

But Isaac said to his son, How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son? He answered, Because the Lord your God granted me success.

Then Isaac said to Jacob, Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not. So Jacob went near to Isaac, his father, who felt him and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy, like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him. He said, Are you really my son Esau?

[6 : 29] He answered, I am. Then he said, Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you. So he brought it near to him, and he ate, and he brought him wine, and he drank.

Then his father Isaac said to him, Come near and kiss me, my son. So he came near and kissed him, and Isaac smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.

May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. Let people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be Lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you.

Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you. As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac, his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me.

[7 : 47] His father Isaac said to him, Who are you? He answered, I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.

Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me? And I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him.

Yes, and he shall be blessed. As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

But he said, Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing. Esau said, Is he not rightly named Jacob?

For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.

[8 : 52] Then he said, Have you not reserved a blessing for me? Isaac answered and said to Esau, Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him.

What then can I do for you, my son? Esau said to his father, Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.

And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. Then Isaac, his father, answered and said to him, Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven and high.

By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you shall break his yoke from your neck. Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him.

And Esau said to himself, The days of mourning for my father are approaching. Then I will kill my brother Jacob. But the words of Esau, her older son, were told to Rebekah.

[10 : 13] So she sent and called Jacob her younger son and said to him, Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice.

Arise, flee to Laban, my brother in Haran, and stay with him a while until your brother's fury turns away, until your brother's anger turns away from you and he forgets what you have done to him.

Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereft of you both in one day? Then Rebekah said to Isaac, I loathe my life because of the Hittite women.

If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women like these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me? Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women.

Arise, go to Paddan Aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. God almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.

[11 : 28] May he give you the blessing of Abram to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham.

Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his word and to his name be the praise. Turn back with me in your Bibles to the passages we read in the book of Genesis, Genesis 25 and 27.

I'd like to look at these passages with you this morning under the title, Jacob lives up to his name.

Jacob lives up to his name. Chapters 3 to 11 of the book of Genesis present us with a bleak picture.

First of all, we have an account of the fall when our first parents, Adam and Eve, deliberately sinned against God.

[12 : 39] They disobeyed him and so brought death and sin into the world. Then we have the murder of Abel by his brother Cain.

That is followed by the flood which God sent to punish the burgeoning wickedness of humanity. And in chapter 11 we have the construction of the Tower of Babel reflecting the pride of men and women and their determination to do their own thing.

It's only in chapter 12 that things take a turn for the better. as God calls a man called Abram and asks him to move to a land that he will show him.

God promises to give Abram a blessing. He promises to bless him and to make him into a great nation. The provision of a family is obviously crucial to the fulfillment of God's promises.

But it was many years before Isaac was born and it finally looked as if God's promises were being fulfilled.

[14 : 02] In due course Isaac and his wife Rebecca had a family. They too had to wait. Rebecca was initially barren and it was in answer to specific prayer that the twins Esau and Jacob were born.

Isaac and Rebecca were in the covenant line but their faith was tested just as Abram and Sarah's had been before them. And even when the boys arrived things were far from straightforward.

They didn't get on. They had very different personalities. Esau the elder son was an outdoors type. He became a skillful hunter a man of the open field.

Jacob by contrast was a quiet cerebral type. He preferred to stay at home among the tents.

Esau was rugged and impetuous. What you saw was what you got. He lived for the moment. But Jacob was thoughtful and measured.

[15 : 17] He was also intensely ambitious and potentially manipulative. their mother Rebecca had been alerted to their rivalry even before they were born.

She was alarmed by the way the babies jostled each other in her womb and she asked the Lord what was going on. He told her that she was going to have twins who would be the progenitors of two peoples and nations.

the one shall be stronger than the other the older shall serve the younger. When the time came for the boys to be born Esau was born first but Jacob emerged hanging on to his brother's heel.

Jacob's name picks up on that. It means he grasps the heel but figuratively the name also has the connotation of deceiver.

You see in the Bible names often denote character. Both by name and by character Jacob was a deceiver a schemer a twister.

[16 : 40] Not only were Jacob and Esau very different their parents took sides. They had favorites. We see that in verse 28 of chapter 25.

Isaac who had a taste for wild game loved Esau but Rebekah loved Jacob. Jacob was his mother's favorite while Esau was his father's.

So it wasn't just Esau versus Jacob it was Esau and Isaac versus Jacob and Rebekah. That surely was a recipe for disaster.

In the closing verses of chapter 25 we have round one of the family squabbles as Esau gives away his birthright.

Esau was the older twin and as the older son he had a special status and was entitled to a greater share of the family estate but Jacob saw an opportunity to wrest that from him.

[18 : 01] One day Esau returned famished from a hunting expedition. Jacob was cooking a stew and Esau asked him for some.

Jacob agreed to give him some stew but only on condition that he would give him his birthright.

He wanted him to surrender his birthright to him. This was no boyish prank on the part of Jacob. He knew what he was doing. He even got Esau to confirm the deal with an oath.

Jacob took advantage of his brother's weakness. In that moment all Esau was concerned about was to have his hunger satisfied.

He had a physical need and he wanted it met straight away. The longer term consequences were irrelevant. And so in the words of verse 34 Esau despised his birthright.

[19 : 12] He sold his birthright for a portion of lentil stew. Round one to Jacob.

We read about round two in chapter 27. By this time Isaac was an old man and had lost his sight. he wanted to give his favourite Esau his special blessing.

The fact he sought to do this in private may indicate that he was aware that what he proposed doing wasn't entirely free from difficulty.

Presumably he was aware of the prophecy that the older son would serve the younger. he may well have been aware too that Esau had sold his birthright.

Isaac may have been trying to take things into his own hands but before he blessed Esau he wanted him to go out hunting and prepare a meal of his favourite game.

[20 : 23] Like his older son Isaac set great store by his stomach. Rebecca happened to overhear Isaac speaking to Esau.

She didn't want her favourite Jacob to lose out. She concluded that prompt action was called for and so she took matters into her own hands.

She conspired with Jacob to ensure that it was he who received his father's blessing not Esau. She hurriedly prepared a goat stew for Jacob to give his father.

While Jacob did in accordance with his mother's instructions he did what he could to pass himself off as Esau. He put on Esau's best clothes so that he would have his brother's smell on him.

And he draped goat skins on his hands neck to simulate his brother's hairiness. In the event Isaac wasn't entirely convinced.

[21 : 37] He was surprised that Esau was back from the hunt so soon. And he also recognized Jacob's voice. But he quelled his doubts sufficiently to tuck into the stew and proceed with the blessing.

Jacob was happy to go along with his mother's little scheme. He willingly pretended to be Esau. He lied to his father. He was even prepared to invoke God to explain how the meal had been prepared so quickly.

When he was challenged by his father he says in verse 20 the Lord your God granted me success. And what about Esau?

When he got back it was too late. It was a done deal. His brother had received the blessing. Esau was gutted.

He wanted revenge. He decided he would kill his brother. As soon as their father died. And in the meantime he made his parents life a misery through his marriage to a Canaanite woman contrary to their wishes.

[23 : 04] What a mess. No one in this story emerges with any credit. Jacob had won rounds one and two of the family squabbles but he done so by deceit and cunning and earned the undying hatred of his brother.

He had to bid his mother farewell and flee for his life as he sought refuge with his uncle Laban in far away Haran.

I'd like to highlight four things from these two episodes. The first is that God works with flawed people.

God works with flawed people. In these chapters God is building his covenant family. The family through whom he will bring blessing to the entire world.

But the people he uses are not plaster cast saints. Far from it. They're all sinful flawed individuals.

[24 : 17] Isaac is weak and yet tries to get his own way. Rebecca is manipulative. Esau lives for the moment. Jacob is tricky and ambitious.

Their family life is what we would nowadays term dysfunctional. And yet it is through people like that that God chooses to work to accomplish his purposes.

I think that should encourage us. If God didn't work with flawed people what hope would there be for any of us? We're all sinful.

We're all rebellious. We all have weaknesses and failings. None of us can take the moral high ground and point the finger at others. But the good news is that God works with flawed people.

He hates sin but he reaches out in mercy to sinners. He has provided a way by which sin can be forgiven and we can be brought into relationship with himself.

[25 : 31] Isn't that what the apostle Paul says? While we were still weak at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

The Lord Jesus himself said those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners.

From the very beginning God worked with flawed individuals like Rebecca and Jacob and he still receives into his family all who acknowledge their need and cast themselves unreservedly on his mercy.

There's an old hymn that puts it like this come ye weary heavy laden bruised and mangled from the fall if you tarry till you are better you will never come at all not the righteous not the righteous sinners Jesus came to call.

John Newton spent years of his life captaining slave ships at that time he was in his own words an infidel and a libertine a servant of slaves in West Africa but in due course God's amazing grace reached out even to him following a severe storm off the coast of Donegal fall in which his ship almost sank Newton was converted he went on to become an Anglican clergyman he exercised an influential ministry but he never forget forgot the depths of depravity from which he had been delivered over the fireplace of his study in his rectorate One was written this quotation from the book of Deuteronomy thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of

[28 : 01] Egypt and the Lord thy God redeemed thee there's a famous quotation attributed to Newton in his old age church my memory is nearly gone but I remember two things that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great saviour God works you see with flawed individuals there is hope for you and for me my second point is this God's favour is not earned God's favour is not earned the people God chooses to work with are no better than anyone else they owe everything to God's free unmerited grace this is something which the apostle Paul is at pains to say in his great letter to the

Romans in fact he uses Jacob and Esau as an example of this principle he writes though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad in order that God's purpose of election might continue not because of works but because of him who calls Rebecca was told the older will serve the younger both Jacob and Esau were sons of Isaac and grandsons of Abraham they shared the same genetic inheritance they had the same privileged upbringing and yet it was through Jacob not Esau that God chose to continue the covenant line that had nothing to do with inherent worth or personal merit or achievement after all God's choice was made before the twins were even born before they had done anything they were still in the womb when the

Lord told Rebecca that the younger son would take precedence Jacob didn't earn that privilege he certainly didn't deserve it that privilege was his by God's sovereign choice alone the Bible teaches that in eternity past God set his love on particular individuals he did so for reasons known only to himself he exercised a sovereign choice there are aspects of this we cannot understand but we shouldn't let the things we can't understand blind us to the things we can understand and one of these things is that none of us earn salvation it's offered on God's terms it's a free gift and that is good news because the gospel offers salvation freely to everyone no matter what you've done no matter how sinful you are or how sinful you feel yourself to be salvation is yours for the taking all you have to do is to believe in

God's son a basic difference between biblical Christianity and other religions can be summed up in two letters of the alphabet the letters N and E other religions say do do this do that do the next thing but biblical Christianity doesn't say do it says done it points to all that Christ has done on our behalf in his life death and resurrection the focus is on all that he has done in his finished work there will be no self made men and women in heaven no one will be there on their own merits no one will be boasting about anything they have achieved instead they will be praising the father who set his love upon them the son who came into the world to die for them and the spirit who brought them to faith and enabled them to persevere in the

Christian life we don't earn God's favour any more than Jacob did the invitation of the gospel is simply this believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved thirdly sin does not ultimately thwart God's purposes sin does not ultimately thwart God's purposes on the contrary God uses even sin in the accomplishment of his purposes now we need to be careful here God doesn't tempt anyone to sin that's something James makes absolutely clear in his letter let no one say when he is tempted he writes I am being tempted by

[34 : 02] God for God cannot be tempted by with evil and he himself tempts no one but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire thus desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death we cannot blame God when we sin we alone are responsible but in a mysterious and inscrutable way God can use even our sin in the accomplishment of his purposes we see that very clearly in the passages we have looked at this morning it was God's purpose to make Jacob the covenant heir and Jacob did become the heir even though that came about through sinful actions on his part and on the part of others when

Esau discovered what Jacob had done by impersonating him and receiving the blessing from his father he says in verse 36 of chapter 27 is he not rightly named Jacob for he has cheated me these two times he took away my birthright and behold now he has taken away my blessing Jacob had acted dishonorably he had wronged his brother and he was responsible for his sin and yet Jacob's sin didn't take God by surprise God didn't have to opt for plan B when Jacob behaved the way he did no Jacob's sin was used to further God's purposes the Lord had an overarching plan we see the same thing in the story of

Joseph later in the book of Genesis remember how Joseph's brothers were jealous of him and sold him into slavery he suffered a great deal as a result of what they did and yet it was an account of what they did that Joseph found himself in Egypt where he eventually achieved high office and was in a position to help his family when famine struck in the land of Canaan the brothers behavior was wrong it was indefensible and yet Joseph was able to say to them later it was not you who sent me here but God he has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt on another occasion Jacob says to his brothers as for you you meant evil against me but

God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today the brother's sin was used by the Lord to bring about his good purposes España entry for who moment to cross Après year angelsgue o mayor hè de god cream right■ e de Hom state■ manners cross God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. There he decisively defeated sin and death and Satan. No greater sin was ever perpetrated and no greater victory was ever achieved.

On the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter roundly condemned his Jewish hearers for what they had done. This Jesus he said you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. Guilt attached to any who had played a part in the crucifixion. They were responsible for their actions but Peter could also say that Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

[38 : 59] God had an overarching plan and purpose. Let's be encouraged by that. By the fact that even sin doesn't derail God's purposes. Sin doesn't have the last word. The God who works with flawed people isn't thwarted by their sin. All sin is serious but it needn't necessarily be a dead end. You may be conscious of sin in the past. You may be struggling under a weight of sin in the present. But that's not an insuperable problem for God. There's a way back to God from the dark paths of sin. There's a door that is open and you may go in. At Calvary's cross is where you begin when you come or come again as a sinner as a sinner to Jesus. Even sin does not thwart God's purposes.

But fourthly and finally sin has consequences. Sin may not thwart God's purposes but we may have to live with its consequences. The choices we make matter. The people in these passages made real choices.

When he saw an opportunity to deprive Esau of his birthright, Jacob seized it. When his mother came up with a plan to deceive his father, Jacob went along with it. In order to have his immediate physical needs met, Esau chose to sell his birthright. He bartered his future for his present. They were real people who made real choices and their choices had consequences. Rebekah made choices which meant she had to say goodbye to her beloved Jacob. It must have broken Rebekah's heart to see him go.

And in God's providence she was never to see Jacob again. By the time he returned to Canaan, Rebekah was dead.

Jacob's wrong choices also had consequences. He lived much of his life knowing his brother was out to get him. He spent years as a fugitive.

[41 : 47] He worked for his uncle Laban who turned out to be as much a trickster as he was himself. Jacob suffered many hard knocks.

I like Derry Kidner's comment. In Laban, Jacob found his match and his means of discipline.

Life was hard for Jacob, but God was gracious to him and overruled things wonderfully. Although he did have to live with the consequences of his sin.

And what about Esau? The writer to the Hebrews warns his readers, See to it that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal.

For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought the blessing with tears.

[43 : 01] Esau was a man who indulged his appetites. He thought so little of his birthright that he was prepared to sell it for one meal. He did later want to have his birthright back.

But as the writer to the Hebrews reminds us, For him, there was no going back. In his case, sin had permanent consequences.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the kindness and severity of God. We see that in the passages before us.

God works with flawed people. His favour is received, not earned. He can use even sin in the outworking of his purposes.

All these things show how incredibly kind and gracious God is. But sin is serious.

[44 : 04] It has consequences. And so we mustn't trifle with it. Let's not take God's grace for granted. Let's not have hard and unrepentant hearts.

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just. And will forgive us our sin. And cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let us pray. Let us pray. Oh Lord, we thank you for the demonstration of your grace and kindness we see in the passages we have read.

Lord, we pray that we may be encouraged to cast ourselves unreservedly on the mercy of a gracious God.

Lord, we pray that we may be in the Lord. And help us not to trifle with sin. Help us to see that sin has consequences.

[45 : 17] May we seek independence upon your spirit. To live lives that honor you. And give you praise.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Shall we conclude by singing the hymn of holy? Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
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Amen. Amen.