

The Sons of Isaac

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Date: 03 December 2023

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Genesis chapter 25, I'm going to begin reading in verses 19, so if you'll look there with me. It says, These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son.

Abraham 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.

[1 : 10] And the Lord said to her, 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, so they called his name Esau. Afterward, his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so that they called his name Jacob.

Isaac was 60 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.

[2 : 18] And Esau said to Jacob, Let me eat some of that red stew, for I'm exhausted. Therefore, his name was called Edom. Jacob said, Sell me your birthright now.

Esau said, I'm 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.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil soup, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way.

Thus Esau despised his birthright. May God bless the hearing and preaching of his word.

In some sketches of the famous American cartoon, Peanuts, there's another sibling besides Linus and Lucy.

[3 : 24] Anybody know who the other sibling is? What his name is? Rerun. Rerun. How did he get the name Rerun?

Surely his parents didn't say, Ah, I know the name Rerun. Perhaps he got his name from his older sister who sighed when he was born.

Oh, no, not another boy. It's just a rerun. Perhaps he got his name by his mom who thought he looked like his father who said, Yeah, you're just a rerun of dead.

And don't we often say the same thing when we see a kid who looks or acts like his parents? We say she's just a chip off the old block. That boy is a spitting image of his old man.

They're just a rerun. As we turn to the story of Isaac this morning, in many ways it's just a rerun of the story of Abraham. Like his father, Isaac's wife is barren.

[4 : 27] Like his father Abraham, Isaac must wait on the Lord for his wife to conceive. Like his father, as recounted in Genesis 26, there's a famine in the land and Isaac has to flee in the same way we saw that in Genesis 12 with Abraham.

Like his father, when Isaac passes through the land of the Philistines, he asks his wife to say, Tell them all you're my sister so that my life will be preserved.

Why is Isaac's life a rerun of his father's? Surely it's because it's true. All these things happen. Scripture doesn't tell us things that did not happen.

But why is so much of Isaac's life left out, but all the similarities with Abraham's life preserved? It's because we're meant to see in the life of Isaac that the faithful God keeps his promise to the next generation.

The promise of God continues to the next generation so seamlessly that it looks like a rerun. This message was surely one the original recipients would have longed and needed to hear.

[5 : 41] The book of Genesis, as we said, was written to a people that were wandering through the wilderness. So they'd already been delivered from Egypt and through the Red Sea. But the problem was the first generation was passing away.

They trusted God to make it out of Egypt, but they did not trust him to take him into the promised land. And so they died because of their unbelief. And here this second generation is walking through the wilderness, but they didn't pass through the Red Sea.

They weren't there on the night of the Passover. Surely they began to ask, will God do it again? Will God keep his promise? Will he lead us out of the wilderness?

Will God keep us and protect us? We wrestle with the same questions. Have you ever noticed that it's so easy to trust God to work in someone else's life, but it's so hard to trust him to work in your own?

We've seen God work again and again for his people. And we've seen God in scripture. And then we've seen it in our own lives. And when a friend faces trouble, we say, girl, you got this. God's got this.

[6 : 46] And yet in our own lives, we say, does God got this? What if darkness doesn't lift like before? What if the economy crashes and I lose everything?

What if they don't recover? What if they're never the same again? What if I can't get my act together? Continue to fail.

Will God still keep me then? Genesis 25 placed in our Bible to give us an unshakable hope. It wonderfully invites us to see the rerun of God's faithfulness to the next generation, but it also unveils the foundation of God's promise in his sovereign grace.

And where we're going, the promise will pass from generation to generation because God saves sinners single-handedly by sovereign grace. The promise will pass from generation to generation.

The promise began in divine election. The promise began in divine election.

[7 : 58] If you notice, our text began with one of those formulas that we've seen all throughout Genesis. It began, these are the generations of Isaac.

It separates Genesis into ten sections, but it's not so much telling us the story of Isaac as much as it is telling us the story of his children.

This is what became of his family, especially his son, Jacob, as we'll see in this section. And so it begins to tell the story of Jacob.

Abraham fathered, I mean, and of Isaac. Abraham fathered Isaac, and Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah to be his wife.

Like Abraham, Isaac's wife is barren. Look at verse 21. Isaac prayed to the Lord because his wife was barren.

[8 : 53] All throughout the story of Genesis, it just seems like God keeps making things harder for himself. Sometimes you feel that way in your own life. Lord, this would be so much easier if you did A follow or B followed A and C followed B, but you don't do life that way.

And once again, the right woman married to the right man is barren, unable to conceive. Wonderfully, though, Isaac doesn't turn to a surrogate wife.

He doesn't turn to a servant. In fact, Isaac's the only patriarch who remains faithful to one wife. Instead, Isaac calls on the Lord.

Look at verse 21. Isaac prayed to the Lord because his wife was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah, his wife, was conceived. Tells us if you scroll down, or not scroll down, look down to verse 26.

In our internet age, Isaac was 60 years old, 20 years later, before the baby finally came. Now, I want us to see something.

[10 : 04] You know, if you remember, the story of Sarah's barrenness stretches eight chapters in 25 years. Much of the focus of those chapters from 12 all the way to 21 are on the anguish and anxiety of barrenness.

We're made to feel Sarah's grief. We're made to feel her heartache. We're made to wait with her for the promise. Remember how we rejoice at the birth of Isaac, the celebration, the answer to all these years of waiting.

But the story of Rebekah's barrenness is enclosed within one verse. And all the focus is not on her anguish and her anxiety. All the focus is on the Lord.

The author is carefully emphasizing something. It is the Lord alone who gives life. We know that already, but he's emphasizing the way it's written. It's the Lord alone who gives new life. He's alerting us to something that we're going to see throughout this passage is that the children of the promise are not those born of the right family.

They're not those born with the right pedigree. You know, we're trying to pick a dog. We want the right pedigree. Well, that's not the way God works. That which is flesh is flesh.

[11 : 14] The children of God are born of God. That's why John 1 says to all who received him who believed in the name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.

Immediately after the Lord causes them to conceive, the children begin fighting within the womb. Look at verse 22. The children struggle together within her.

Kind of a prelude to what they're going to do outside of her. But they struggle together within her. And she said, if it is thus, if this has happened, why is this happening to me?

Now, from my vantage point, every pregnancy looks uncomfortable, but this pregnancy is downright painful. The children are wrestling in the womb.

Literally, they're smashing themselves against each other in the womb. You know, we like to feel an arm, you know, in the womb or whatever. But this is a smash against each other so much, though, that Rebecca says, why is this happening?

[12 : 22] Why shouldn't I just die? This is the answer to the promise. Now, we've got to remember, Rebecca is not one of the desperate housewives of Israel.

She's not a fair damsel. She impressed Abraham's servant by drawing water for all his camels, and each camel would drink like 25 gallons. So we're talking about a woman with biceps.

Fit right in. But the pain and anguish leave her wondering whether it would be better for her to die now. Rather than keep going on.

She turns to the Lord for help. It's just a wonderful little window to her faith this season. Verse 22, it continues.

So she went to inquire of the Lord. There's not a lot to imitate from this passage, but that's one thing to imitate.

[13 : 24] Where do we run in trouble? We run to the Lord. The Lord gives her a word.

Look in verse 23. And the Lord said to her, two nations. This is an oracle from God. Two nations are in your womb, and the two peoples from within you shall be divided. The one shall be stronger than the other.

The older shall serve the younger. On the one hand, the Lord explains why her pregnancy has been so difficult. The reason is two nations are within her.

Two peoples that will be divided and opposed to each other throughout life are within you. So there is a fight. That's why there's so much struggle, so much trouble.

There's a storm brewing with these two boys. And it's brewing already. And we'll see the division throughout their life. But it also, the Lord also explains that the promised son will be the younger, not the older.

[14 : 27] The order of nature and custom would belong to the oldest son. The oldest son receives the birthright. He receives honor and a greater portion of the inheritance. But this author, but as one author says, the order of nature is not necessarily the order of grace.

From the way God works out things in this world, the order of nature is not necessarily the order of grace. And we've already seen this in Genesis. We saw that it is not Cain's sacrifice, the first son, that is accepted, but his younger brother, Abel.

And the promise continues through the youngest brother, Seth. It's not Ishmael who's chosen the older one, but the younger Isaac. The order of nature is not necessarily the order of grace.

But there's a deeper point here. The order of grace is also not determined by tradition or heritage or gifting or natural abilities or character. It's determined by the oracle of God.

In order for grace to remain grace, grace must be decided by divine election. Before anyone has done anything good or bad.

[15 : 40] Otherwise, it's just a form of strategy. And in Romans 9, the Apostle Paul takes up this text when explaining how God's saving love is based entirely on divine election.

On the sovereign will and good pleasure of God. Look with me. He says, it's not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

When Rebecca had conceived, that's her text. Children, my one man, our forefather Isaac, 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, she was told the older will serve the younger.

As it is written in the prophets, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. There's a lot going on in that text.

One thing that's definitely going on is underlining very carefully that grace is not based on anything we do. Before Jacob and Esau are born, before they had done anything in their body, even though they were of the same mother, indeed of the same womb, God said the older will serve the younger.

[17 : 09] I have purposes for the older that are different than the younger. It's not merely saying that Esau just cut out from the promise immediately because of that. It's just telling us this is how God's purposes are carried forward, by divine election, by his sovereign good pleasure.

He's in the heavens and he does what it pleases. If it was any other way, grace would no longer be grace. If foreknowledge means God looked through the corridors of time to see who would trust in him, or if he looked through the corridors of time to see who would follow him and obey him, then that is not grace.

God is just doing strategy or wisdom, but it's not grace. He's picking a good candidate, but that's not the way grace is. Grace is decided by divine election before anything is done.

The promise began in divine election. Now, how would this, so I want to push this down. How would this truth have affected the original recipients? Why does Moses craft this this way for the original recipients?

How would this truth affect them when they're out of power and strangers in a strange land? This truth would remind them that God did not choose them because they were good or great or powerful.

[18 : 29] If you want to read on that, read Deuteronomy 7, a radically divine election-centered chapter. God did not choose them because they were good or great or powerful, and so he will not forsake them because they're low.

As John Flavel, our friend from last week, said, as God did not at first choose you because you are high, so he will not forsake you because you are low.

That's why it's crafted this way to build their faith. God's election, his purpose is for them, your chosen people out of all the peoples of the earth.

His purpose for them were not rooted in anything they had in themselves. And so when they don't have those things anymore, they have nothing to fear. Do you see? Again and again, we see this in the New Testament.

Why is the doctrine of election underlined throughout the New Testament? Surely it's not because God needs it. He knows how he saves people single-handedly.

[19 : 29] It's for us. Many times the doctrine of election is placed in our Bibles to anchor the believer in struggle. And for those who love God, all things work together for good, according to those who are called, according to his purpose.

Those whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he predestined, he also called. Those whom he called, he also justified. Those whom he justified, he also glorified.

So the believer is not hanging adrift in this world, but hanging in the midst of God's unshakable purposes. That's what the divine election is meant to do.

Because, beloved, if you could lose your salvation, you would have lost it already. Me too. The scene closes with the birth of the twins.

The first son comes out hairy and red. He's like this hairy red monster. Esau. You're like, man, such a vivid image. The second comes out holding Esau's heel, as if to pull him back in so he can go out first.

[20 : 43] They name him Esau, because he's red. Jacob, which sounds like heel and means to protect, like a fighter would remain at the heel of the back of the army and would protect the people from a rear attack.

But before long, his name would have another meaning, the heel clutcher, the usurper, the deceiver. So it seems Isaac and Rebekah believe the word of the Lord.

They give their son Esau a very traditional name. They give Jacob an exalted name. But we have to read more to see more. Point two, the promise is not thwarted by human sin.

The promise is not thwarted by human sin. The significance of receiving the word of the Lord, the word of divine election ahead of time, makes sense when we see the sinfulness of Isaac.

As Charles Spurgeon once said, I know he would have chosen me before I was born, because after I was born, he would have found nothing in me to choose me. And so we see the utter sinfulness of Isaac, Rebekah, and the boys.

[21 : 58] The boys grow up like all children. They're quite different. Look at verse 27. It continues, this division that begins in the womb, it continues throughout life, even into boyhood. When the boys grew up, verse 27, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man dwelling in tents.

Esau is a hunter, an outdoorsman. Finally a man in Scripture we can follow. But we're not meant to look up to Esau.

Men in the Old Testament were to be sojourners and shepherds, not hunters and warriors. Esau, it says later, lives and dies by the sword. Let it not be so among the men of God.

Jacob is a quiet man. Now, we might assume this is a light in the loafers, indoors kind of guy, but quiet does not mean that.

It means sound or solid. While Esau is driven all over the place by his desires, Jacob is not.

[23 : 04] He knows what he wants. He's not distracted by anything else. And as they grow up, Esau and Rachel fail them. Look at verse 28.

28, it says very plainly, Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Having received the word before they were born, the parents should have learned how to cultivate these kids.

They should have cultivated a sense of contentedness and joy in Esau, a sense of humility and selflessness in Jacob, but they don't. It says Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game.

Literally, it says because of the game in his mouth. Like, now you do the takeaway. Not a very commendable picture of Isaac.

I'm sure he loved the food, but what we're meant to take away that Isaac and Esau, he loved Esau because Esau was like him. We're meant to note the similarities. Esau fails because he wants something to eat.

[24 : 15] Isaac fails at the end of his life because he wants something to eat. So it seems Isaac loved Esau because he saw a kid that was like him, and so too Rebekah loved Jacob.

Perhaps she loved him because he was a son of promise, but I think based on what we see later, she loved him because he was like her. She was single-minded. She was determined and dedicated.

She was unyielding. Or Jacob was all these things, single-minded, determined and dedicated, unyielding just like her. In many ways, Isaac and Rebekah are failing the way many parents do.

Parents of multiple kids do. They tend to love the child most like them. Parenting can be difficult, but many times the difficulty is not the sins of the children, but the way our children are unlike us.

If our child likes sports, we like sports. It's wonderful. It's nirvana. Happy days. If our child likes books, and we do, it's wonderful.

[25 : 17] But if our child is absent-minded when we're focused, it's frustrating. If they're loud, when we're quiet, we're annoyed. If they're complex, and we're easygoing, happy, okay, so-ra, so-ra, we're exasperated.

Many times we'll say, if you're honest in your household, what's wrong with that boy? Why is she like that? I'm done with them. You got to take care of them.

But, beloved, the problem is not with the child. It's with you. There's no question. One of the things that's ripping at the seams of America right now is the fathers who aren't there, and the fathers who are there, but for all intents and purposes, aren't there.

I watched a provoking documentary on these psychologists that went into a prison in California, and they invited, it was invitation, or I mean, it was, you had to commit to come, you know, you had to volunteer to come, but it was three days of counseling about how you got here and what's going on in your life.

And so there are men on the outside, and there are men on the inside in there kind of working together and counseling together. One of the things that just came through again and again is the father that wasn't there.

[26 : 43] One of the stories that affected me the most, though, is this young man, kind of this hapless, innocent-looking guy, who when asked started talking about his relationship with his dad.

His dad was a big, brawny, work-on-the-car sort of guy, and he was this kid who didn't fit in with any of those things. He told this provoking story of his dad inviting him out one time.

He died to go outside and work on the car with his dad because there's nothing he wanted more than in life and to be accepted by his dad. He's out there, and dad says, get me a wrench.

And the kid goes and gets a wrench. He said, that's the wrong wrench. Go get me another wrench. The kid comes out. That's the wrong wrench. He gets him another wrench. That's the wrong wrench.

And he says, go inside with your mom. And here's this 40-year-old man who's still ripped in shreds because his dad didn't love him the way he was.

[27 : 47] That's exactly what's going on here. Your job as a parent is not to help your child become more like you. We don't need another you. Not to like what you like and to do what you do.

Your job as a parent is to help your child become like the Lord. That's what's going on. Isaac and Rebecca, do not make that choice. And the chosen family is flawed and unraveling with sin.

The text continues, and it tells this story about Jacob cooking some stew and Esau coming in and being famished. And so Jacob makes this little deal with him.

Swear with me. Give me the birth white. I'll give you some stew. And we begin to see how the parenting and also how their sin is shaping them. Jacob is single-minded.

His single-mindedness has given way to a selfish, conniving scoundrel. Now, notice he longs for his father's affection. He longs for the honor and inheritance that belongs to the firstborn.

[28 : 48] He knows that his father loves Esau's game. And so here he is, the very next verse. He's cooking now. Now, Isaac loved Esau because of the game hanging in his mouth.

So here's Jacob just desperate. Let me make some stew. But when Esau comes in begging for food, he has another idea. He says to Esau, I'll give you some stew, but sell me your birthright now.

In the original language, he says, sell it to me last. So he carefully crashes, sell your birthright now to me. Unlike Abraham and Lot, we're meant to see immediately he's not generous.

He's not open-handed. This one in whom the promise is to carry forward is not hospitable. He's crafty and cunning. He jumps at the chance to get what he wants.

He's a conniving scoundrel. You know, we live in a world that's so filled with people like Jacob. We're not surprised when people have an angle. We're surprised when they don't.

[30 : 01] Oh, you just want to hang out with me because you're me. You're not caught. You know, your old friends call you after 20 years. You find out they work for New York Life. Thought you wanted to catch up.

Are we like that? Always getting our way. Always have to have the last word.

If Jacob is a pushy scoundrel, Esau is a shameful pushover.

Esau's free spirit gives way to a man led by his feelings. He's known. Notice, he's known as a hunter because he's not someone who's learned to wait on the Lord.

He's hunting. He's not content. He's not careful. He's driven about by the wind of his feelings and his craving. He's impulsive. Most of what he does, he does without thinking.

[31 : 08] He's impolite. He bursts in. He says, quick, give me some of that red stuff. And so the red man, fighting for some red stew.

He's irresponsible. When Jacob says, sell your birthright now, he says, I'm about to die. What use is that to me? He's overly temporally focused.

That's not very helpful. But, you know, what he wants right now, he swears to give it to Jacob. Jacob serves him some bread and stew and he eats.

Look at verse 34. Four. The verbs capture the thoughtlessness of Jacob. Jacob gave Esau, I mean of Esau. Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew and he ate and drank and rose and went his way.

What you meant to see? No thought, all action. Four verbs. No thought, all action. Thoughtless, free spirit.

[32 : 12] We live, and I think we are more like Jacob than we like to think. We live in the internet age. I said a moment ago, in the age of social media. Six years ago, Bill Maher said, the tycoons of social media have to stop pretending that they're friendly nerd gods building a better world and admit they're just tobacco farmers selling an addictive product to children.

Because, let's face it, checking your likes is the new smoking. Would you give your 13-year-old a pack of cigarettes? Maybe you shouldn't give them a phone.

Or think hard about it. Social media is specifically designed to get you to spend more and more time. I was reading this book, Digital Minimalism. Talked about what made social media really work when they started introducing rewards.

So, the rewards for checking up on your friends became first this comment. So, you had this little comment block. And they say, you go, girl. You know, hit that marathon or whatever it is. You know, and you got that. And then, you know, some people weren't bold enough to comment all the time.

So, they introduced the like. So, you didn't have to write anything. All you had to do was just hit like. And it's like a massive dopamine hit. It's like hitting the jackpot. Jackpot. As soon as they introduced the like, the time spent online went through the roof.

[33 : 32] You know, and then finally they introduced the refresh button. So, you could scroll through all of your timeline or whatever it's called. And then, you can scroll back to the top and yank down and the pinwheel pops up.

They call that the slot machine. Because let's see what else you got. And again, the time went through the roof. Now, you may think I hate social media.

But so much of the internet is doing the same thing. Getting you to indulge without thinking. That's the goal. Getting you to invest hours and hours of your time thoughtlessly.

News sites, sports sites, YouTube, you name it. Most of the time, if you listen to me. Most of the time, the problem is not with what we watch on the internet. But with how we watch it.

There's certainly things you should not watch on the internet. Because of the content in itself. But the bigger problem is how we watch it. It's enticing you into an overload.

[34 : 32] In which you appear. Little different than Esau. Exchanging valuable time for thoughtless emotional satisfaction that is fleeting.

And so the chosen family is a wreck. Having seen how the promise began in divine election.

And then to see how far the chosen family has fallen. We might expect to read of the judgment of God. But I think it's intentional this way. The promise, it began in divine election.

And it's not thwarted by human sin. And what would we expect of the people after Adam? And so the original recipients would have been those people.

Wandering through the wilderness. Numbers 11 kind of stuff. Grumbling and complaining. And they would be reminded that they're not chosen people because of their good works.

[35 : 30] God chose what was foolish in the world. The shame, the wise. The weak. The shame, the strong. The low and despised. To bring to nothing the things that are. And this family fits the bill.

Much like mine. Point three. The promise rests on sovereign grace. The promise rests on sovereign grace.

The story ends with Esau despising his birthright. Look at verse 34. Very last sentence. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

It doesn't merely tell us the exchange. It tells us the posture of his heart. He despises this birthright that he's received freely from the Lord.

And then that's the end. I mean, that's the end. That's the end of this text. I mean, what are we meant to take away from this story? Why are we meant to learn that the promise began in divine election?

[36 : 33] Why must we learn that the promise is not thwarted by human sin? I believe so that we might learn that the promise rests on sovereign grace. The promise passes from generation to generation by sovereign grace.

God doesn't graciously begin his saving work and then leave it in the hands of chance or of good works or fortune or anything after that. God secures it from beginning to end.

It's by grace, not by works. Romans 11. Later, Apostle Paul says, At the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works.

Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. What he's saying is grace is thoroughly gratuitous. Grace is completely gracious.

Now, that makes sense. But grace is completely gracious. Completely unwarranted, unprovoked, unmerited. No one is accepted because of tradition or heritage or gifting or natural ability or character.

[37 : 41] But the reverse is also true. No one is rejected because of their past or their failures or poverty or weakness. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. As Acts 2 says, The grace of God is for all who call on the name of Jesus.

Jesus. And so, this story is a warning. It concludes with a warning.

Esau despised the birthright. He's so impulsive, so careless, so thoughtful. He exchanged his birthright for a piece of bread. Sometimes we look at a guy like Isaac and we think, Man, that's one of those guys.

His only enemy is himself. You know, he just keeps bumbling around and getting in a stupid situation because his enemy is himself. He just keeps making these same mistakes. But Scripture will not let us stop there.

Isaac's not, he's not his own main enemy. The main enemy of Isaac is God. That's what Scripture tells us later on because he wastes the privileges he enjoyed.

[38 : 44] He squanders the opportunities he had. He throws away the blessing of God. For what? The groaning of his appetite.

The cravings of his heart. Fails to obtain the grace of God. Look in Hebrews 12. This is where we see the Lord's perspective of Isaac. It says, See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God.

That no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble. And by it many become defiled. That no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

What this is underlining for us, what we need to see in putting this together and putting all this Scripture together. No one who wants to be saved is not saved.

The mystery, the way divine election and human responsibility works, no one is saved. No one who wants to be saved is not saved. Those who are not saved, those who are not elect, do not lose something they sought.

[39 : 52] They lose something they disdained. They lose something they rejected. Something they counted as no value. It's not even worth more than a bowl of soup.

The story of Isaac is a warning to us. Are you a nowhere man? Are you a drifter? Are you chasing a thrill?

Whether drink or sex or food or any other pleasure. Are you so caught up in the things of this world that you don't realize an exchange is taking place in your soul? This story is a warning.

You may be raised in the church. You may be raised in a right family. You may know the things to say. You may have the resume. But people may say, you are your worst enemy. You began good.

You are your worst. You can't get out of the way of yourself. But God is saying, I am your worst enemy. Because what you need to be rescued from is not the mistakes of this life, but the wrath of God that's coming.

[40 : 56] I see that no one despises the blessing of God or fails to obtain the grace of God. The story is also an invitation.

Did you notice that there's no one here that you need to be like? You can't moralize this passage. Be like Jacob. Cheat your brother. Surely we wouldn't say, be like Esau and follow your heart.

There's no one virtuous because there's no one truly good except one. The story is meant to lead us to an end of ourselves to see that we can only be saved by sovereign grace alone.

And the wonder of this time of year that we remember and celebrate that unlike Jacob, Jesus did not grasp for power. He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself.

He didn't hold on to the prerogatives of being God. What were those prerogatives? Endless praise of angels. The glory that he had before the foundation of the world. He emptied himself, born into a hay-scattered stall, as we sang a few moments ago.

[42 : 11] He became what he was not. He became a man. That's the mystery. The Son of God became a man, united himself in human flesh, indivisible forever. He became a baby.

He became a baby. He became a baby. Unlike Jacob, he did not look to his own interests. He didn't gather a people who weighed on him at his beck and call.

For his selfish interests, he became a servant. He washed our feet. He took up our sins. Unlike Esau, Jesus did not exchange his birthright for a few moments of relief.

If we could say it this way, he did not follow his heart. He said, not my will, but yours be done. Instead, he exchanged himself for all those who follow their heart, all those who went astray, all those who have an angle, all those who can't get out of the way of themselves.

He put himself in that place. He exchanged himself for all of God's children who had become his enemies because of sin, and he became the enemy of God. as the weight of sin rested on his shoulders and the furious wrath was poured out upon him.

[43 : 25] Has there ever been a love like this? I pray that this Christmas would be one in which you stop the game.

I'll never forget 22 years ago when I became a Christian. I went back and sang all the old songs, but suddenly they meant something different now.

God had transformed my heart. I could say, I love you. I want to serve you. I live for you alone. Realized that it was like all those other years were just in the dark.

I was seeing lots of lights at Christmas and all that stuff. Suddenly, it's like I was in Narnia. You know, the whole world opened up to see the glory of God at Christmas.

I pray that's your experience. The promise will pass from generation to generation because God saves sinners single-handedly by sovereign grace.

[44 : 41] Years ago, a man wrote trying to capture the message of the Reformation which we've talked about here, Sundays.

And he said, and I think it's the message of these verses, the Reformation was a time when people went blind, staggering, drunk because they had discovered in the dusty basement of late medievalism a whole cellar full of 1,500-year-old, 200-proof grace.

of bottle after bottle of pure distillate. Now, you might not like that metaphor. Pure distillate of Scripture that would convince anyone that God saves us single-handedly.

See, beloved, wonderfully, the story of the Bible is a story of sovereign grace from beginning to end. It's not just, there's this old bad guy in the Old Testament and the new loving guy and the new, no, the story is of God chasing a people that were running the other way, calling a moon worshiper out of Ur of the Chaldeans and saying, I'll make from you a people as numerous as the stars, a God who doesn't turn away at all the ugliness that fills the chosen family because he has a plan that will redeem the chosen family, a chosen family from every nation, tribe, tongue, and all of it sing of sovereign grace because God does again and again what only he can do by grace.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for these few minutes of sitting on your word. Lord, we offer ourselves to you sincerely, completely. We don't want to play the game.

[46 : 35] We give to you our lives, Lord. We thank you for passages like these. We're reminded that our thoughts are not your thoughts. Our ways are not your ways. We bow before you. Oh, the depths, the riches, and wisdom, and knowledge of God.

How inscrutable his judgments. Unsearchable his ways. Who could know the mind of the Lord? And yet, Lord, what we know is completely staggering.

That you came for those in the highways and the byways. Those without God and without hope. you took the strangers and you put them in families.

You brought the dead to life. Set the captives free. Refreshed to the scourge and brokenhearted and weary. A thrill of hope has come and we worship you and praise you.

We hide ourselves in you. In Christ's name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

[47 : 43] For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. and we'll see you next time. you