

The Portrait of a Dysfunctional Home (Part 2)

When the self-life reigns in the home

Text: Gen. 27:18-46

Introduction:

1. This is a sad chapter in Isaac's home. Wiersbe titles this section "A Masterpiece in Pieces". We tend to think about this account in terms of Jacob deceiving his father of the blessing. That is certainly part of the story but it is only one dimension of a home where each member of the family was out of step with God's will in some way.
2. There are important lessons and challenges to learn for the Christian home in this passage. We need strong, biblical homes in our day where each member of the family is submitted to God's will. We are studying this account under four headings.

I. THE CATALYST FOR THE DECEPTION (VS. 1-4)

A. Isaac's Physical State (Vs. 1)

1. His body was aging (Vs. 1a)
2. His sight was abating (Vs. 1b)

B. Isaac's Mental State (Vs. 2; 4b)

C. Isaac's Spiritual State (Vs. 3-4)

II. THE CONSPIRACY OF THE DECEPTION (VS. 5-17)

These verses primarily focus on Rebekah's response to her overhearing her husband's plan. Jacob was a willing accomplice to the crime! Isaac's plan to do something contrary to God's will was wrong but Rebekah's response to Isaac was also wrong. Our responses to wrongs reveal just about as much about our spiritual state as our own sinful decisions.

A. Rebekah's Wily Plan (Vs. 5-10; 14-17)

B. Jacob's Willing Participation (Vs. 11-14)

1. Jacob's Concern (Vs. 11-12)
 - a. The concern that Jacob raised with his mother in response to her plan reveals a lot of where he was at spiritually at this time. Notice that Jacob does not object to the plan being sinful. He does not counsel his mother that to deceive his own father and brother would be ungodly. His only concern was that he might get caught. We see that Jacob, as with the other members of the family, is being self-centred. "Sadly, Jacob's concern wasn't "Is it right?" but "Is it safe?" He was worried about the eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt not get caught". Isaac's wrong philosophy was "If it feels good, it is good". Rebekah's wrong philosophy was "The end justifies the means!" (Warren Wiersbe)
 - b. Jacob is typical of so many who are not concerned about the seriousness of sin but who care only about the potential consequences for their sin.
2. Jacob's Cooperation (Vs. 13-14)

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Jacob was all too willing to go along with his mother's deceptive plan. This was because her plan was in line with:

- a. Jacob's natural deceitfulness – like mother like son! Jacob was wired in a similar way to his mother. Deception was in his DNA also. After all, his name Jacob meant “heel gripper”.
 - i. “The picture is that of one grabbing the heel of another to trip him up. The word supplanter describes the action. And the word “supplanted” is what Esau used of Jacob when Esau missed out on the blessing from Isaac.” See Gen. 27:36. The word ‘supplant’ means “to trip up the heels; to remove or displace by stratagem; or to displace and take the place of” (Webster's 1828).
 - ii. This action of Jacob as he came out of the womb was indicative of his inner nature in Adam. He would be a calculating, deceiving individual who was skilled in getting the best out of a situation. God in His love and grace would work on Jacob to transform him from Jacob, a supplanter, to Israel, a prince with God.
- b. Jacob's natural desires – to get an advantage over his older brother and take the primary position of authority and influence in the family clan appealed to Jacob. He had already outsmarted Esau of the birthright for the low cost of a bowl of lentil soup. Now he would partner with mummy and pull the wool over dad's eyes by putting some wool on himself. We are always more susceptible to sinful suggestions that appeal to the bent of our sin nature. We should note that despite Jacob's fleshliness at this time of his life, underneath it all he did value spiritual things as highlighted in his desire for the birthright vs Esau's despising of it.

III. THE CARRYING OUT OF THE DECEPTION (VS. 18-29)

Jacob now puts his mother's deception plan into action, deceives Isaac and secures the patriarchal blessing for himself.

A. The Beguiling (Vs. 18-26)

Jacob weaves a **tapestry of lies** to deceive his father. When you resort to lying, you rarely stop at one lie. One lie leads to another and soon you find yourself trapped in your own web of deception.

Consider...

1. Jacob's Deceitful Claims (Vs. 18-20, 24)

Take a look at Jacob's litany of lies:

- a. Lie # 1 – I am Esau, thy Firstborn (Vs. 18-19a, 24)
 - i. Jacob approaches his father Isaac and blatantly lies about his identity, claiming to be his firstborn son Esau.
 - ii. Isaac, somewhat in doubt, asks “Art thou my very son Esau?” to which Jacob replies, “I am” (Vs. 24).
 - iii. God's Word exhorts the believer, “**Lie not one to another**, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;” (Col. 3:9)
- b. Lie # 2 – I have done as you asked (Vs. 19b)

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- i. In reality, Jacob didn't go hunting, nor did he make the venison. Liars have no problem claiming something about themselves which in reality is the total opposite to who they are as an individual.
 - ii. That Jacob was no hunter, we know from Genesis 25:27 "And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents."
 - iii. Note: We should remember that Jacob was lying to his own father at his mother's behest. She had actually encouraged her son to blatantly lie to his own father! It is a sad day in a marriage when you have a spouse making an unholy alliance with a child in the home to actively work against the other spouse.
- c. Lie # 3 – I was helped by the Lord (Vs. 20)
- i. This lie is the worst of all. Isaac rightly asks how it was possible that he had found the game so quickly and Jacob responds with the claim, "Because the LORD thy God brought it to me".
 - ii. Telling a lie is wicked enough but using the Name of the God as a cover to your deception is the lowest kind of lie that can be told.
 - iii. And yet how often Christians try and wrap their deception and compromise in a spiritual cloak. The Name of our blessed Saviour gets attached to things He has nothing to do with!
- d. Lie # 4 – I really am Esau! (Vs. 24)
- i. Isaac's question gave Jacob an opportunity to come clean and admit he was lying. Instead, he doubles down and affirms that he is in fact Esau.
 - ii. Sir Walter Scott wrote in his poem "Marmion", "O what a tangled web we weave/ When first we practice to deceive".
 - iii. If you start traveling down the highway of deception, take the nearest exit as the longer you travel down that road, the worse things will get. Jacob was sowing some things in his life at this time and his time of reaping would come.
2. Jacob's Deceitful Costume (Vs. 21-27a)
- a. Jacob covered his identity with a deceptive cloak. He wore Esau's cloths and put the skins of the goats upon his arms and neck to make himself seem hairy like his brother. In this way, Isaac's sense of touch and smell would be deceived. Jacob provides a vivid picture of a hypocrite. A hypocrite is someone who is a play actor and puts on a false appearance. In the words of Webster's dictionary (1828) a hypocrite is, "One who feigns to be what he is not; one who has the form of godliness without the power, or who assumes an appearance of piety and virtue, when he is destitute of true religion."
 - b. Jacob crowned the act with a deceptive kiss. A kiss is meant to convey genuine affection and sincerity in this cultural and family

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context and yet it was really a kiss of betrayal. Isaac's deceitful kiss reminds us of some other deceitful kisses in the Bible. Joab kissed Amasa before he stabbed him to death (2. Sam. 20:9). The harlot kissed the unwise young man before she destroyed his morals (Prov. 7:13) and Judas Iscariot kissed the Saviour in betraying him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:48-49).

- c. Note: Here we come face to face with Jacob as he is in Adam. He is the supplanter, the heel catcher, the deceiver. But God was going to deal with this deceiver and turn him into Israel, a prince with God.

B. The Blessing (Vs. 27-29)

Jacob's deception succeeds and Isaac proceeds with bestowing the patriarchal blessing upon Jacob. We note three aspects to the patriarchal blessing:

1. The Temporal Blessings (Vs. 27-28)
 - a. The first part of Isaac's blessing is focused upon material blessings related to the productivity and fruitfulness of the land.
 - b. Notice the blessing of fruitfulness is described in three ways:
 - i. The dew of heaven.
 - ii. The fatness of the earth.
 - iii. Plenty of corn and wine.
 - c. While the temporal blessings were a legitimate part of the covenant, it is interesting to note that temporal things are at the forefront of Isaac's mind at this time. Contrast this with the second blessing he pronounces on Jacob after this incident in Genesis 28:1-4.
2. The Governmental Blessings (Vs. 29a)
 - a. Rulership over Nations – "Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee". The closest Israel came to this part of the blessing in her history was during the golden era of Solomon's reign. Due to Israel's disobedience to God, she has been oppressed and dominated by the Gentiles for much of her history. Only in the Millennium will Israel enjoy this aspect of the covenant in its fulness. The converted Jews will be held in great honour by the nations in the Millennium.
 - i. Zech. 8:23 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even **shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.**" "Taking hold of the skirt" refers to taking hold of the edges of the Jew's garments. The Hebrew word for "skirt" ("kanaph") is elsewhere translated "borders" (Num. 15:38) and "corners" (Is. 11:12). It referred to the border of Saul's robe (1 Sam. 24:4). The Gentiles will bow down and take hold of the skirt as a sign of respect and submission."¹
 - ii. Isaiah 49:23 "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to

¹ D Cloud, *Way of Life Commentary Series; Minor Prophets*, p. 372.

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- thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”
- b. Headship in the family – “be lord over they brethren”.
 - i. Remember that this meant being the one to carry on the Seed Line. What a privilege to be a link in the Messianic family tree!
 - ii. It is a reminder of just how much Isaac was out of step with God’s will in seeking to bestow this upon Esau when God had made it clear by direct revelation that “the elder” was to “serve the younger”.
3. The Spiritual Blessings (Vs. 29b)
- a. Isaac now pronounces God’s promise that was made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”
 - b. This is a key part of the blessing and shows that the blessing God pronounced on Abraham in Genesis 12:3 was intended not just for Abraham as an individual but for Abraham’s descendants who would become the nation of Israel.
 - c. This Divine pronouncement of blessing and cursing has never been rescinded and nations that bless Israel today will be blessed of God and nations that curse Israel will be cursed of God. Those who engage in Antisemitism are in serious trouble with God Almighty!
 - d. Illustration: England and her mistreatment of Jewish refugees after World War 2.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECEPTION (VS. 30-46)

The account goes on to demonstrate the sad consequences to this whole situation. When the cover was blown, each person responded differently. How did each member of the family respond in the aftermath of this event?

A. Isaac – A Sober Response (Vs. 30-33; 37-40)

Isaac, despite his failures in the first part of the story, appears to begin thinking and acting in a wiser, more spiritual fashion from this point.

This is noted in:

1. His Conviction about the Situation (Vs. 30-33)
 - a. Esau’s Coming (Vs. 30-32). Esau arrives on the scene just moments after Jacob had left his father’s presence. How often monumental moments in history come down to a few minutes!
 - b. Isaac’s Trembling (Vs. 33). All of a sudden, the situation dawns on Isaac and he “trembles very exceedingly”. This was not a little trembling; the old man shook violently as the reality of what had just happened crashed in upon him.
 - i. Isaac trembled with emotion. The trembling of the body indicates the welling up of very strong emotions in Isaac. Think of what this must have been like for Isaac as he realized that his own wife and son had conspired together to deceive him.

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- ii. Isaac trembled with conviction. It is also likely that at this moment Isaac's conscience was awakened from slumber as he realized that His plan to bless Esau in place of Jacob had been overruled by the Providence of God. We would do well to tremble at times in the remembrance of the fact that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).
 - iii. John Gill writes, "He (Isaac) was amazed, and astonished, and seized with a trembling all over his body, and with terror and confusion of mind; at the craft of Jacob in getting the blessing; at the disappointment of Esau in losing it; at his own act in blessing Jacob instead of Esau, contrary to his inclination and intention; and at the overruling providence of God in bringing this about in so strange a manner, agreeably to the oracle he had given Rebekah; which now perhaps came fresh into the mind of Isaac, if he had heard it before; and all together threw him into this amazement:"
2. His Submission to the Situation (Vs. 37-40)
 - a. Isaac's submission is seen in his refusal to reverse the blessing he had just pronounced upon Esau. Comparing Hebrews 12:17 it seems clear that Esau hoped to secure a change of mind in Isaac through his tearful pleadings but to no avail.
 - b. Isaac's submission is seen in the second blessing he bestowed in Jacob in chapter 28:3-4.

B. Esau – A Sour Response (Vs. 34-38, 41)

There is no question that Esau had suffered wrong at the hands of his Rebekah and Jacob. Isaac also bears responsibility as he was wrong to raise an expectation in Esau that he would receive the blessing contrary to God's revealed will for the family. In the Christian life, we WILL experience injustices, wrongs and hurts at the hands of others, and sadly including at the hands of fellow believers. There is a right and a wrong way to respond to such things. Esau's response serves as a warning on how **NOT** to respond to such things. Esau responded with:

1. Bitterness (Vs. 34-36)
 - a. The Bible says that Esau cried with "a great and exceeding **bitter** cry". This is the first time the word is used in the Bible and gives us helpful insights into the problem of bitterness.
 - b. We know from the immediate context the word speaks a certain kind of crying. These were bitter tears over a bitter experience for Esau. However, we know from the key New Testament passage on bitterness that Esau's problem was not just bitter tears but bitterness of heart.
 - c. Hebrews 12:15-17 "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled; **Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau**, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he

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found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

- d. We would do well at this point to segue into a summary of the key truths concerning the subject of bitterness presented in these verses. There are five important lessons regarding bitterness we need remember:
- i. The **candidate** for bitterness – “lest **any man**”. No one, no matter how spiritual is exempt from the danger of bitterness. It can infect **anyone!**
 - ii. The **cause** of bitterness – “fail of the grace of God”. The word ‘fail’ means “to lack or be in want”. The lack of grace is not on God’s part. His supply of grace is infinite and available to every believer (2 Cor. 9:8). The failure is on the part of God’s people to appropriate the grace of God in their lives when trials and hurts come. The word ‘bitter’ means “to cut or prick”. Bitter experiences create wounds in the heart and precipitate the onset of the disease of bitterness unless we apply the ointment of God’s healing grace to those wounds.
 - iii. The **character** of bitterness – “lest any root of bitterness springing up”. The development of bitterness is from root to fruit. Bitterness lies beneath the surface unseen and undetected at first but eventually “springs up” and manifests its ugly fruit. A good illustration of this is the waters of Marah (Marah is the Hebrew word for bitter). Exodus 15:23 “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they *were bitter*: therefore the name of it was called Marah.” On the surface the water appeared drinkable but upon tasting it, the children of Israel realized they were bitter. We see in Esau the marks of a bitter person.
 1. They reinterpret the past (Vs. 36). Esau fails to mention that he despised his birthright and blames Jacob for everything.
 2. They focus on the temporal rather than the spiritual. As a profane man, Esau was only interested in the material and temporal aspects of the blessing.
 3. They are often immoral. Esau was a ‘fornicator’.
 4. They are revengeful towards those they are bitter against.
 - iv. The **contamination** of bitterness – “trouble you and thereby many be defiled”
 1. It damages you – “trouble you”. The word literally means “to trouble in a crowd”. It means to vex, irritate, torture and annoy. The same root word is translated ‘vexed’ twice in Luke 6:18 & Acts 5:16 in relation to the work of “unclean spirits”. Bitterness will torture your soul. You are the one who suffers when you are bitter, not the person you are bitter against. Bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person

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drops dead. Bitterness often leads to immorality and profane living (valuing and prioritising the temporal above the eternal).

2. It defiles others – “and thereby many be defiled”. Bitterness is like a fast moving, infectious plague. It’s a spiritual super spreader virus which if left undealt with, can do widespread damage and harm. Absalom’s poisoning of the people against David is a prime example of how just how far and how much damage one man’s bitterness can do (See 2. Samuel 15).

v. The cure for bitterness – “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God”. There are two cures for bitterness:

1. Guarding the Heart – “looking diligently”. The word means “to look carefully, to beware.” The same word is translated in I. Peter 5:2, “taking the **oversight** (thereof)” and “the office of a **bishop**” in I. Timothy 3:1. Also ‘**overseers**’ (Acts 20:28) and ‘**bishop(s)**’ (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7, 1 Peter 2:25). Christ is described as the “Shepherd and **Bishop** of your souls” (I. Peter 2:25) Each believer needs to be a bishop of their own heart! Proverbs 4:23 says, “**Keep thy heart** with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.”
2. Grace in the Heart – “the grace of God”. If failing of God’s grace is the cause of bitterness, then availing oneself of God’s grace is the preventative and the cure for bitterness. What a wonderful example we have in Joseph who was enabled by God’s grace to respond right to the hurts in his life. “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; **but God meant it unto good**, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” (Gen. 50:20) What a wonderful example we have in our Lord Jesus Christ who despite all the bitterness of the cross (bitter accusations, bitter thorns, bitter whips and bitter nails) prayed “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Lk. 23:34) Going back to the illustration of the waters of Marah (Ex. 15:22-27), the cure for those bitter waters was a tree the LORD shewed Moses – “And he cried unto the LORD; and **the LORD shewed him a tree**, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet...” (Vs. 25). If you will come to God and cry out to him about the bitter state of your heart, He will point you to the rugged tree of Calvary as it is only at the foot of the cross that bitter hearts can be made sweet.

2. Maliciousness (Vs. 41)

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- a. Bitterness, if allowed to fester and grow in the heart, can turn to icy, murderous hatred as seen in the example of Esau.
 - i. He hated Jacob because of the blessing.
 - ii. He resolved to murder Jacob upon his father's death.
- b. The error of the saying "time heals all wounds" is illustrated in the fact that **over 20 years later** when Esau heard that Jacob was returning went out with 400 armed men to meet Jacob and would no doubt have killed him had it not been for the intervention of God (Refer Genesis 32-33). In reality, apart from the grace of God working in the heart, bitterness only gets worse with time. **Time and the grace of God** are needed to heal from hurts.
- c. Illustration: Absalom is another prime example of one who nursed bitterness towards David for years over his inaction in relation to the scandal involving Amnon and Tamar which eventually resulted in Absalom leading a revolt with the intent to kill his own father and steal the kingdom.

C. Rebekah – A Scheming Response (Vs. 42-46)

1. Rebekah's Manipulation (Vs. 42-46)

Rebekah continues with her calculating ways in order to try and rectify the damage she has done.

 - a. Rebekah's plan for Jacob (Vs. 42-45). Rebekah – "obey my voice"! She's at it again! There is something wrong with this picture as Rebekah is still very much in the driver's seat of the home rather than Isaac.
 - b. Rebekah's presentation to Isaac (Vs. 46). No doubt Rebekah was concerned about who Jacob was going to marry but this was not the primary thing motivating her to send him away. Sadly, she is still operating in a calculating and deceptive way with her husband.
2. Rebekah's Miscalculation (Vs. 44-45). Rebekah's "few days" turned out to be 20 years. Rebekah tried to "save" Jacob in the wisdom and energies of the self-life and "lost" Jacob. Luke 9:24 "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Trying to achieve God's will your way never ends well.

D. Jacob – A Submissive Response (28:1-5)

1. We will continue with the account as it develops in chapter 28 next sermon but we briefly note at this point that Jacob submitted to his parent's council and embarked on the long journey to Padanaram to find a wife.
2. In some ways it looks like Jacob gets the best deal out of the situation. He gets to go and get married, leaving angry Esau and the whole mess behind him. But God was not asleep! The law of sowing and reaping would catch up with Jacob in the not-too-distant future and eventually Jacob would have to face Esau again.

Conclusion: Is the self-life reigning in your heart and home? How are you responding to difficult and hurtful experiences in your life? Are you embracing God's model for marriage and the Christian home?