

March 17<sup>th</sup>

## THE CHEATER COMES OUT

*“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. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.”* **GENESIS 25:31-34**

“**You cheated! That’s why you won!**” Ever heard those words in your family? It comes around with family game time. The competitive drive between family drives some to stoop to the lowest level to win the game. This temptation didn’t begin with the “Spygate” and “Deflategate” of the New England Patriots. Wicked scheming has been here since sin entered the world. We get introduced in these verses to the first professional cheater...his name is Jacob. What does God teach us through Jacob’s actions in these few verses?

As I wrote yesterday, Esau rightly gets the blame for what happened with the birthright. And yet we see in all the interactions with Jacob and Esau that neither man is right in God’s eyes. They both are dreadful sinners before a holy God. Jacob’s name predicts his actions, “he cheats.” His name can also mean “he takes by the heel,” but Esau saw him as a cheater: “Is he not rightly called Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times.” You may be aware of Jacob’s cheating later, but do you see where the cheating starts at this event? It doesn’t just come with the deal to switch places with the birthright. It begins with making the stew. Do you think that this is the first time what Jacob has seen Esau hangry and impulsive? Jacob knew Esau’s nature...and he pounced on it. Consider the cold deal that is proposed: “Sell me your birthright now...swear to me now.” These aren’t random ideas that just came into Jacob’s mind. He’s been waiting for this opportunity. God’s blessing means so much to him that he schemes to get it. He becomes his very name.

In this encounter, we see a huge contrast between Jacob and Esau. Esau sees God’s blessing as nothing but a piece of paper that can be sold. Jacob prizes God’s blessing as his highest honor. But the same root of sin is seen in them both...distrusting the God of promise. Esau doesn’t give God’s promises dignity and the highest worth. Jacob gives them the highest value but doesn’t trust that God will accomplish them in His time. He can’t rest on God’s timing for His promise. He can’t help himself; it’s in his sinful DNA. Manipulate and cheat to get God’s promise. He can’t wait for God to do it Himself.

Men, what does Jacob’s cheating mean to you? How can this ancient story apply to your life and family? You can see that the sin of distrust comes masked by the plans of man. Think about it. Our plans as men to succeed in this life often replace our trust in God. Can’t see it yet? How often are you troubled by anxiety and worry? How often do you struggle with complaining and bitterness? These are just sinful fruits that come from the tree of distrust in the God who gives His promises to you. Jacob believed God, this is true. And so do we. We believe that God will save...but then we go on our way of planning to make our lives great again. We scheme not to cheat someone else maybe, but we can cheat God. We can cheat God’s glory. Think about it. If we achieve it by our work, why does God need glory? Jacob’s life gives us a warning. It’s possible to believe God’s promises and try to help them along at the same time. Why not give up the struggle and give all glory to God where it’s always meant to be...God’s alone?

***Spend some time thinking about ways that you have distrusted His promises. Confess these sins and ask God to help you trust in Him alone today.***

**For Further Reading: Proverbs 3:5-6**