



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

Genesis 25:19-34

The Trickster Jacob vs The Profane Esau

Philip Yancey has written, "I have come to know a God who has a soft spot for rebels, who recruits people like the adulterer David, the whiner Jeremiah, the traitor Peter, and the human-rights abuser Saul of Tarsus. I have come to know a God whose Son made prodigals . . . the trophies of His ministry." Yancey's observation perfectly fits Jacob.

About one-fourth of Genesis is devoted to Abraham's grandson, Jacob. He was the actual father of the nation of Israel, via his twelve sons, and from him came the actual name of the people—"Israel." Even while Jacob and Esau were in Rebekah's womb, God declared by divine election that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). Jacob would thus be the heir to the Covenant promise. But Jacob, with the help of his duplicitous mother, secured those blessings his way. Because he was holding on to his brother's heel as he came out of the womb, Jacob was called the "heel-catcher, the supplanter." Because Esau was dismissive and indifferent to his position as the firstborn, he sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of red stew (25:29-34), and Jacob leveraged that indifference. Further, he secured the special blessing of Isaac by deceptive means. Driven by his mother, Rebekah, Jacob tricked Isaac into thinking he was Esau. So, Isaac blessed Jacob and that blessing, along with the birthright, were irrevocable (27:1-45). For fear of Esau, Jacob fled Canaan to Paddan Aram, where he lived for twenty years. Although by nefarious means, Jacob became the bearer of the Covenant blessing and the heir to Canaan. Esau inherited what became known as Edom.

There are five significant elements of Jacob's life important to the history of Israel. The first begins with his birth in Genesis 25:19-34. The connection to the Abrahamic Covenant is unmistakable here. This is the continuation of the "seed" of Abraham mentioned in Genesis 12—the central covenant passage. Rebekah's pregnancy is also by divine grace and divine providence. She was barren, as was Sarah!

1. God's Divine Choice, 25:19-23

There is turmoil within Rebekah's womb. So, Rebekah seeks the LORD's help. By sovereign election, God declared that the promised line would belong to Jacob, the younger son. Therefore, Jacob owed his supremacy not to natural order or to human will, but to divine

election. When God chooses to do something like this, He upsets the natural order of society, which often results in opposition and antagonism. "Those who claim to be the chosen of God cannot expect the world to congratulate them" (see John 15:18-19). Furthermore, both Isaac and Rebekah exemplified the essence of faith: Isaac's prayer; Rebekah's inquiry, and the naming of the boys. We can thereby conclude that God used the barrenness and the struggle of the boys to prompt the faith of Isaac and Rebekah. God covenantal promises will not be achieved except by faith in God.

*Rebekah learns that "Two nations are in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger."*

2. Jacob, the "heel-catcher, the deceiver," 25:24-26

The Hebrew name, "Jacob," came to suggest "take up the heel, trip up, defraud, deceive." Thus, the descriptions of the two boys—Esau and Jacob—reflect their appearance and activity at birth, but in both cases their names were ominous, anticipating the natures and activities of the two and their descendants.

3. The Contrast of the Twins, 25:27-34

In Genesis 25:27-34, we see that Jacob and Esau developed according to their initial characteristics: The "redman" was overcome by his physical appetites for the "redstuff" and sold his birthright. The "heel-catcher" cunningly overtook his brother and gained the birthright. But, we learn that there are no winners in this encounter. Neither man is exemplary. Esau, the profane man, considered the spiritual heritage of little value and traded it for soup. Jacob, the shrewd man, regarded the spiritual heritage of high value, but made the cause serve him through manipulation.

The focus of 25:27-34 is on Esau, the profane, irreverent man in contrast with Jacob, the settled, stable, thoughtful man.

- Esau lived free (v. 27)
- Esau sought the natural senses (v. 28)
- Esau was the victim of personal appetites (vv. 29-30)
- Esau relinquished things of value for the satisfaction of his appetite (vv. 31-33)
- Esau had no regard for the things of God (v. 34).

We learn here that living only to satisfy physical appetites inevitably leads to despising things of eternal value, especially the things of God. But Jacob knew his brother was profane and he took advantage of his brother to obtain what God had promised—albeit his way. He sought that which had eternal value—but he sought it via nefarious means.

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