

SESSION #13

In our last session we saw Jacob's manipulation and deception in gaining the birthright and the blessing. Now we examine...

D. THE RESULTS

- Sir Walter Scott's famous lines of poetry well describe Jacob:
*"Oh! what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive."*
- mother and son weave a web which entangles the entire family in disaster
- in their refusal to wait on the Lord to perform his purposes in his own timing, they *all* rushed ahead with their own designs & devices; and all 4 of them made their lives difficult as a result
- they reveal some **PAINFUL LESSONS** for us:
 - 1) we cannot bring about good results using **wrong means**
 - 2) the life of faith requires **patience**
 - 3) sin brings **consequences**, even in the lives of God's people
 - for **Rebekah**: she never saw her favorite son again, she completely alienated her other son, and she severely strained the relationship with her husband
 - for **Isaac**: one son forced to flee from the family home for his life, relationships fractured with his wife and other son, who now felt rejected by his father
 - for **Jacob**, his relationships with the rest of his family were now thoroughly messed up; his only brother (a twin at that!) was now seeking to kill him!
 - he also lost his wealth & influence; never saw his mother again; and was deceived by others throughout rest of his life
 - "what goes around comes around!"
 - and the blessing which he had wanted more than anything on earth, became for him a terrible *burden* because he had not allowed God to give it to him in *His* timing

If we choose to sin, ignoring or disobeying what God has said, we will pay a price. The **choice** to sin or not to sin is ours; but we cannot choose the **consequences**.

Gal. 6:7 in the Message translation reads: *"Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life."*

- * Isaac tries to **thwart** God's plan
 - * Rebekah tries to **fulfill** God's plan
 - * Jacob tries to **speed up** God's plan
- ...there are differences between them but one thing is **common**: they all deny God's right to be God – unwilling to wait on the Lord to accomplish his will in their lives; made their lives difficult by pursuing their own designs (Arnold)
- **Isaac**: "God isn't **smart** enough – he has the wrong plan"
 - **Rebekah**: "God isn't **powerful** enough – his plan is right but it isn't going to work"
 - **Jacob**: "God isn't **fast** enough – his plan is right but it's too slow"

- we too easily develop the same arguments when our lives threaten to veer off the track of happiness, comfort or personal fulfillment
 - in our efforts to get it right we respond like Isaac or Rebekah or Jacob, and instead of cooperating with God we end up fighting with him or ignoring him
- sometimes these are virtually unconscious reactions because our modern societies enable us to live “successfully” without God
 - advancements in science & technology have **secularized** modern life to the extent that our world can “manage” just fine without God
 - Os Guinness says: “We can do so much so well by ourselves that there is **no need for God**, even in his church. Thus we modern people can be profoundly secular in the midst of explicitly religious activities. Which explains why so many modern Christian believers are atheists unawares. Professing to be believers in supernatural realities, they are **virtual atheists**; whatever they say they believe, they show in practice that they function without practical recourse to the supernatural.” (The Call 157)
- we become ‘Jacobs’ who by intelligent planning and resourceful, energetic management can forge our way ahead – in the direction *we* want to go and at the pace *we* choose to set
 - we may begin with a nodding acknowledgement to the idea that God has a plan; but we end up ignoring him as a non-entity in the overall outworking of our daily lives
- God’s call to us in Christ directly contradicts such a secularized mindset; it is a call to follow Jesus, by faith,
 - “to a kingdom and a life made qualitatively different by their supernatural dimensions.” (as Os Guinness says)
- here in Genesis we are dealing with the “family of the promise” – the inheritors and transmitters of God’s covenant promise with Abraham which will one day bless the nations of the world!
 - one of the **tragedies** of this record is not simply what these characters – who should have known better – did to *each other* but how they **mistreated God** in the process
- at the same time, one of the **highlights** of this record, and I think the most prominent lesson of all is that while we may indeed mess up, as they did,

GOD’S PURPOSES PREVAIL

 - the Lord is still absolutely sovereign and will accomplish His purposes regardless of our devices and disasters
 - ...*He operates against the odds, He goes against the grain, He loves the unlovely, and plants His promise in the unpromising*
 - Prov. 19:21 “*Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.*”
 - Bill Arnold wrote that “the **promises** are *of* God and *from* God” – they don’t depend on our goodness or efforts, nor on our faults and failings
 - 2 Cor. 1:20 says, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” **in Christ**. [no IFs, BUTs, or MAYBES] And so through him the “Amen” [so be it] is spoken by us to the glory of God.”

- even though scoundrels like Jacob are involved, God is still sovereign and will not let his promises fall or fail – the Promise still ‘takes off’, on schedule, safely & securely in Christ
- and – wonder of wonders! – He even designates the “Jacobs” of this world to be the carriers of the Promise, the recipients of his grace, the participants in his plans
- ...we bow in humble awe before such a God of sovereign grace
- and in our own tendency to act like Jacob, we remember Heb. 4:14-16:

“That is why we have a great High Priest who has gone to heaven, Jesus the Son of God. Let us cling to him and never stop trusting him. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”