

**“Fractured Family”**  
**Genesis 26:34-27:29**  
December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Most of our friends from our 8 years in Alabama were members of First Presbyterian Church in Prattville. We truly were outsiders – we had no family there because we weren’t from there, we were a military family (which meant we’d not be there long before we shipped out), and (horrors!) worst of all, we were Yankees! Even so, we were welcomed with open arms into the fellowship of the church.

One of our friends, Blanche, a dear lady who’d lost both of her husbands to tragic deaths, often lamented a truth I’ve come to realize is spot on after 37 years of supervising and counseling others – “Everyone has a dysfunctional family.” That would include your family *and* mine!

It’s sad, but all families are dysfunctional because every family is made up of fallen sinners. Each and every one of us was conceived in sin, born into this life in sin, and we remain in sin unless and until God does something about our hopeless case! We live in a fallen world; a world that Jesus is making new through the ministry of His Church. *What are His words in Revelation 21:5?* “Behold, I make all things new.”

With this in mind, we see the next chapter in a family to which we’ve previously been introduced in the Bible’s first book, Genesis. We have here Abraham’s son Isaac and his wife, and their twin sons. And, if ever there was a fractured family, this is the model; if only the mold had been broken! Philosopher George Santayana called the human family “one of nature’s masterpieces.” If that’s true, many of these masterpieces have become pieces because they forgot the Master.

In this family, upon which God placed the continuation of His covenantal blessing first made to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1-3**, there’s a lack of trust, little communication, sparse spiritual activity, lying, division, and a struggle for prominence. Unfortunately, this could easily be your family. Fortunately, even if that were to be the case, you have great hope if you are walking with Jesus Christ.

**Genesis 26:34-27:29:**

<sup>34</sup>When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. <sup>35</sup>They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

<sup>27</sup>When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.” “Here I am,” he answered.

<sup>2</sup>Isaac said, “I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death. <sup>3</sup>Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me.

<sup>4</sup>Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.”

<sup>5</sup>Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, <sup>6</sup>Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, <sup>7</sup>‘Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.’ <sup>8</sup>Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: <sup>9</sup>Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. <sup>10</sup>Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.”

<sup>11</sup> Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin.  
<sup>12</sup> What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.”

<sup>13</sup> His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.”

<sup>14</sup> So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. <sup>15</sup> Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. <sup>16</sup> She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. <sup>17</sup> Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.

<sup>18</sup> He went to his father and said, “My father.” “Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?”

<sup>19</sup> Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.”

<sup>20</sup> Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” “The LORD your God gave me success,” he replied.

<sup>21</sup> Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.” <sup>22</sup> Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” <sup>23</sup> He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him. <sup>24</sup> “Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” he replied.

<sup>25</sup> Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.” Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. <sup>26</sup> Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son, and kiss me.”

<sup>27</sup> So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said,

“Ah, the smell of my son  
is like the smell of a field  
that the LORD has blessed.

<sup>28</sup> May God give you heaven’s dew  
and earth’s richness—  
an abundance of grain and new wine.

<sup>29</sup> May nations serve you  
and peoples bow down to you.  
Be lord over your brothers,  
and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.  
May those who curse you be cursed  
and those who bless you be blessed.”

There are four key persons here, a cast of characterless characters:

**Person 1 – Esau (26:34 & 35);**

**Person 2 – Isaac (27:1);**

**Person 3 – Rebekah (27: 19-20)**

**Person 4 – Jacob (27:6-27)**

We’ll look at each’s involvement in order of his/her appearance beginning with **Esau**. Look with me again at **verses 34 & 35 of Genesis 26** – “When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. <sup>35</sup> They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.”

*Do you see at least two problems in these two verses?* First, Esau married two women! Nowhere does the Bible sanction the marriage of multiple spouses! True, there are many examples of people with multiple spouses within the pages of the Holy Bible (of note would be the “man after God’s heart” (**Acts 13:22**), David, and his son, Solomon, who the Bible says was “wiser than all men...” (**I Kings 4:31a**), yet he had 700 wives! (**I Kings 11:3**). But the **teaching** of the Bible is that marriage is between one man and one woman, singular – not plural, and that marriage is to be for life. We saw this when we studied chapter 2 – “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (**Genesis 2:24**)

The second problem is that Esau married Canaanite women! These were aliens to the people of the covenant, whom the people of God are not to unite themselves with in holy matrimony! Yet, intermarriage would plague the people of God throughout the pages of the Old Testament. I just mentioned Solomon. He had wives from varying pagan nations, among whom were Hittites (**I Kings 1**), like Esau married.

*How did Esau’s disobedience affect his parents?* Look at verse 35 – “And they (the wives) were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.” In **Genesis 27:46**, Rebekah tells Isaac that she was “weary of (her) life because of the daughters of Heth” (Hittites). And, in **Genesis 28:8**, we see that “the daughters of Canaan did not please...Isaac.”

This serves as an illustration of **Proverb 10:1**, which reads, “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son *is* the grief of his mother.” And, **Proverb 17:11**, which reads, “A foolish son *is* a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him.” This is a timeless principle, still in effect in our day. Parents are grieved by their children’s poor decisions (at all ages, not merely when the children are still home). Such decisions could result in their arrest, confinement and imprisonment; it could be marriage of a Christian child to an unbeliever or a spouse who cannot share the same Christian faith; or it could be living in defiance of a parent’s Christian faith.

So, that’s **Esau**. The second person appears as we turn to Chapter 27 - **Isaac**. We learn here that Isaac is advanced in age – he’s at least 100 years old, since he was 60 when Esau and Jacob were born, and they were at least 40 given the teaching of **Genesis 26:34** (Esau was 40). Isaac’s eyesight is poor, and he believes his death is near, so he calls Esau to hunt wild game and prepare it for Isaac to eat, after which he intends to bless his oldest son, Esau.

Isaac, whether he knew of the incident between Esau and Jacob (in **Genesis 25:29-34**) where the famished Esau traded his birthright (and blessing) for a plate of stew prepared by his brother Jacob, he knew God’s birthright oracle from **Genesis 25:23**:

“Two nations *are* in your womb,  
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;  
*One* people shall be stronger than the other,  
And the older shall serve the younger.”

So, Isaac is actually seeking to overthrow God’s prophesy by seeking to grant Esau, the older son, the blessing. We’ll come back to Isaac shortly.

At this point, **Rebekah** comes into focus. With verse 6, we learn she overheard the conversation between Isaac and Esau. As soon as Esau departs to hunt, we see her conferring with Jacob. Rebekah senses the time is ripe to have Isaac bless his younger son, instead of the eldest. Now, we were just reminded that God said the older would serve the younger; it could be that Rebekah was like Abraham and Isaac who took matters into their own hands to bring about God's child of promise (Isaac). Rebekah may be striking while the iron is hot. But, to expect God's blessing to result from such scheming as we see with her and Jacob, is foolishness! Rebekah failed to trust God to bring the blessing to Jacob in His own time and way.

Rather than talk with Jacob, Rebekah needed to talk with Isaac! How tragic when a husband and wife have excommunicated each other. There is no evidence in this passage that Isaac and Rebekah discussed God's Word, or prayed together. Rather, it appears they shared the same address and rarely interacted with one another. Communication is life blood to a marriage.

Prisoners in the "Hanoi Hilton" – a Vietnamese prison camp during the Vietnam Conflict were told there was to be no communication between prisoners. American military personnel imprisoned there were kept in isolation from one another. According to Captain Red McDaniel, the highlight of each day was being taken to the washroom, where he managed to whisper briefly with two other Americans. They taught him the camp code, which involved a certain number of taps or other signals that spelled out letters of the alphabet.

While at the Hanoi Hilton, it was either communicate or die. New prisoners who didn't learn the code within 30 days would gradually start to draw inward and deteriorate. They would stop eating and slowly lose the will to live. Eventually, isolation would suck their very lives from them.

Isolation and the failure to communicate also drain the life from relationships. That may hit close to home for you. *If you're married, how would you rate your communication of spiritual matters with your husband or wife?* If it is low, I would venture to guess that you and your spouse don't attend Bible study together, nor Sunday School, and maybe even worship. *Will you start doing so, and make it a practice to discuss what you learned?* If you are not married, your spouse is the Church. *What are you doing to cultivate and strengthen that relationship?*

We shouldn't miss how Esau and Jacob are referred to here. Esau is Isaac's son (v. 5), and Jacob is Rebekah's son (v. 6). In neither case are they referred to as *their* sons! This is a huge part of the problem – parental favoritism pitting a favored child against one less so. What a terrible situation! Yet, this isn't something that was isolated to the time of **Genesis 27**! Today, parents willingly or unwillingly, favor one child over others. Jacob will repeat this tendency with his son, Joseph, and we'll see the hardship that brings on father, son, and siblings.

**Jacob** is the fourth person in order of appearance in this passage. It may seem that he is an innocent participant, honoring his mother by doing what she instructs him to do. But, as his name means "deceiver", we see in this account that he lives up to his name well.

After Rebekah instructs him to go the flock and get two young goats, Jacob points out that Isaac might feel his arms and realize that he is not his hairy-armed brother Esau. His concern wasn't "*Is it right?*" but "*Is it safe?*" He was worried about the 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment: "Thou shalt not get caught."

As the scheme is hatched, the disguised Jacob (wearing his brother's clothing, and with goat's wool on his arms) approaches his father with some of his favorite food. Isaac cannot believe that Esau would already be back with a kill prepared to eat. The voice Isaac hears doesn't sound like Esau's, either.

Jacob out and out lies to his father in verse 19 when he identifies himself as Esau. And, in verse 20, Jacob blasphemes God when he said of the food, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me." In verse 24, Jacob lies again when his father asks if he is really Esau.

This convinces Esau that the person before him must be his oldest son, so he pronounces his blessing upon Jacob without realizing it isn't Esau. Jacob was a man who dishonored his father while attempting to obey his mother who required him to sin. In a sense, I almost feel sorry for Jacob because neither of his parents were a godly example for him to follow. But, he would still be accountable for his ungodly behavior.

When authorities, to include parents, require believers in Christ to break the law of God, they must not carry through with such a request. In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the New Testament Book of Acts, we see the apostles being arrested for proclaiming the gospel of grace in the public places in Jerusalem. When they were brought before the tribunal, the high priest asked them (**Acts 5:28**), "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

But, the apostles' response elevates submission to God's Word above that of human authorities. This is **Acts 5:29** – "But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men."

For Christians, our citizenship is in two kingdoms – the kingdom of man, which all human beings are members of, and the Kingdom of God, which consists of only His people – those who are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. God's kingdom trumps Man's kingdom when the two come in conflict with one another.

As we return to **Esau** now, we realize that he was a man who lived by his senses, and didn't walk closely with the Lord. This is how Warren Wiersbe describes him, "Isaac was a declining believer, living by the natural instead of the supernatural, and trusting his own senses instead of believing and obeying the Word of God. He was blind and bedfast and claimed to be dying, but he still had a good appetite. With a father like that leading the home, is it any wonder that the family fell apart?" (Wiersbe, 26)

Looking at this matter from God's perspective, we conclude that His purpose and will were not thwarted by the dysfunctions in this fractured family. He declared that the older would serve the younger, and Isaac's younger son - Jacob – would, as verse 29 says – be "Master over (his) brethren, and let (his) mother's sons bow down to (him).

We'll continue our look at this dialogue, Lord willing, when we gather for worship again next Lord's Day. For now, let's bring this message to a close.

A man saw three men working with mortar and bricks. He went to the first man and asked, "What are you doing?" The man replied, "I am laying bricks." He went to the second man and asked him the same question and that worker said, "I am building a wall." But the final bricklayer had a different answer. He replied, "I am building a cathedral."

In the process of raising kids, it is very easy to feel like you are just laying bricks. In reality, you are building a cathedral, a child or children whom God has given you to train up and carry on in the next generation. This is not only a call to biblical parenting, but a reminder to the church that the children and youth in the church are everyone's responsibility. There is no greater privilege in the life and ministry of Christ's Church! We, church, are a family, and though we have fractures, cracks, and strained relationships, we will spend this life and the next one together.