

Read **Genesis 25:1-34**.

I have often wondered why I am a Christian, why I believed, why I am saved. Why am I going to heaven?

There are many people I know who are kinder than I am, who are better men than I. But, they are not saved.

I know people who are not believers who are more generous than I, they work harder, they suffer more...

And, in spite of all this, God has not saved them. He may in the future, but He has not yet. Why?

God chooses to bless people so that His purpose according to His choice will stand. (Rom. 9:11)

We have before us a chapter of transitions. We are being moved along in the story of Genesis, "Beginnings."

for the first time since the beginning of the Abraham story (Gen. 11:27) we have the formula.

"These are the records of the generations of..." = here's what comes out of that (or him)

Gen. 25:12 What comes from Ishmael... and we are tying up loose ends. It is the last we'll hear of Ishmael.

(except for one little mention when Esau is finding wives in Gen. 28)

Gen. 25:19 what comes from Isaac... and we are going to hear about his two sons.

And, Genesis is going to move us along quickly past Isaac and to the lives of these two sons.

With the exception of the next chapter (Gen. 26) the Bible seems not very interested in Isaac.

Indeed, this chapter is moving us along. It is a transition.

But, in the transition we learn about what God is doing.

For, as with us, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Ishmael, Esau, and Jacob all live in the hand of God.

God sets the course of their lives and His sovereign will prevails.

It is an important lesson, though not a popular one today... but you see it throughout the Bible.

We read in the Bible that the Lord gives and He takes away. (Job 1:21)

The Lord kills and makes alive. He brings down to Sheol and raises up.

The Lord makes poor and rich. He brings low and lifts up. (1 Sam. 2:6-7)

He causes peace and creates calamity. (Isaiah 45:7)

God steers the world, and everyone in it

God determines who He will bless, who He chooses as His own, who He saves. God is sovereign!

We are going to look into two contrasts that display this truth very personally...

These are examples of this Biblical theme and are intentionally tied to it in the Bible.

These are contrasts between people who God chooses... and people He does not.

I. First Contrast: Isaac receives the blessing. Ishmael does not. vss. 1-18

Here we look back at Abraham's life at his death.

We learn that he had family that, until this chapter, we were unaware of.

We don't know when he took Keturah as a wife or when he had these other children. The author is not interested in telling us.

What we do know is that none of them were heirs of the blessing of God on Abraham.

They did not inherit the material possessions of Abraham, nor did they inherit the promise of God from Abraham.

The two apparently come together.

Only Isaac was Abraham's heir. Only Isaac received the blessing from God.

To the others, sons of Hagar and Keturah, Abraham gave gifts and sent them away.

And, if the gifts given to Ishmael (Gen. 21:14) are any indication, the gifts were fairly meager.

We read next of Abraham's death... 175 years, died at a good old age, satisfied.

Not many people in the world get to die this way. Why Abraham? Because God has blessed him.

God promised that He would bless Abraham. He picked him out to be blessed to be a blessing. God chose Abraham.

Gen. 12:1-3 Of all the people on the earth, God picked out this man.

Gen. 15:1, 4-6 God chose Abraham... and Abraham believed God, and God considered him righteous.

Gen. 17:1-8 God chose Abraham to be in relationship with Him, God spoke with him, confided in him.

Gen. 21 God who had promised Abraham and Sarah a son gave them Isaac.

Gen. 22 When God demanded Isaac as an offering, God sent a substitute and saved Isaac.

Abraham dies satisfied because God had made a promise to him and God was keeping His promise.

Abraham knew that God would continue to do so... next to Isaac

So, Abraham is buried by Ishmael and Isaac in that field that was all the land that Abraham possessed.

And, the blessing of Abraham has been passed on to Isaac. Isaac is the promised son, the chosen son.

Ishmael, on the other hand, has a hard life. This is God's doing as well.

God made a promise to his mother, Hagar back in **Gen. 16:10-12** and again in **Gen. 21:18**

And, so, we see in Gen. 25 that what God has said comes to pass.

God makes a great nation of Ishmael, but they are characterized by wildness, strife, and defiance.

God chose Isaac, blessed Isaac, God is with Isaac. Isaac is God's people.

Ishmael is not blessed, not God's people. God who is faithful to His every promise... This is God's doing.

II. Second contrast: Jacob wants the birthright. Esau does not. vss. 19-34

Again, God's choice is the determining factor, but now we find that human desire or action goes along with it.

We have already learned from the previous chapter of the marvelous union between Isaac and Rebekah.

Abraham sent his servant on a two year journey to find a bride for his son among his relatives.

The servant goes, praying, and God leads, answering prayer, Rebekah believes in spite of her family.

She returns and is wed to Isaac and "He loved her." It's beautiful. God is faithful and good.
But, now things are not so easy... she is barren, and Isaac prays. For 20 years he is praying.
vs. 21 "and the Lord answered him..." = but the answering took 20 years! This is God's way.
Remember Abraham? God's fulfillment of the promise of a son took 25 years.
Not only this, but we begin to notice something that will become somewhat of a theme in the Bible...
How does God work? He uses barrenness, prayer, time, and the birth of a child often in His plan.
All as if to remind His people that blessings always come from God. Don't take them for granted.
He uses disappointment and the agony of a long wait, unanswered prayer to teach us, to grow us.
After 20 years Rebekah is pregnant... and confused.
One active baby can be challenging... but two, fighting together in the womb!?
So, she goes out to pray... away from people to hear from the Lord, and He speaks to her.
God tells her who these two boys will be, even before they are born God knows. He has determined this.
"Two nations are in your womb... the older shall serve the younger"
Then they are born, Esau, red and hairy... and Jacob, grasping the heel.
It is not a good name. Jacob means someone who grasps, underhanded, with an intention to supplant or usurp.
Then in the rest of this chapter we see something of their character.
Esau is a tough guy, dad's favorite, a hunter, cooking meat over a fire, impulsive, and short sighted.
Jacob is a homebody, mamma's boy, a cooker of stew, deceitful, conniving, ready to take advantage of his brother.
Who would you choose as the heir? The recipient of the promise?
Well, God chooses the other.

Why? So that you and I and all God's people will learn an essential lesson.

Malachi 1:1-5 God's love is seen in His choosing. And, no matter how hard people try, they will not change God's choice.

Why? So that God's glory can be seen by all... in all the world.

But, if this is not clear enough, Paul takes up the point in the New Testament.

Romans 9:8-13 God chose Jacob even before either of them had done anything good or bad.

Why? "So that God's purpose according to His choice would stand,
not because of works but because of Him who calls."

Romans 9:14-18 God decided to whom He will show mercy, not on the basis of what they do!

vs. 15 is from Ex. 33:19 where God is showing Moses His glory and what it means for Him to be God.

vs. 17 is out of the Exodus story where God demonstrates His glory by crushing Pharaoh.

Romans 9:19-23 So, here is the point for we who might struggle with the apparent unfairness of all of this.

God does what God wants so that we would see who God is... wrath, and mercy.

And, so we would see the folly of human arrogance.

For we will all face Him someday. We might as well learn sooner than later that He is in charge.

God chooses. That is His right. That is what He does.

God chose Jacob and not Esau... and His choosing is an expression of His loving.

But, there is one last thing to see in light of God's choice... and we will find it back in Genesis 25.

It comes from asking the question "Why?"

Why does Esau sell his birthright to Jacob?

The birthright amounted to 2/3 to all of what Isaac had... probably all because Isaac had received all from Abraham.

The birthright also included the blessing, as with Abraham and Isaac...

And, we will discover, this is so with Isaac to Jacob.

Essentially, the birthright = the continued blessing of God, the place in the promise of God.

Why does Esau sell it to Jacob?

Was he really going to die? Did he think that "red stuff" = "meaty stew" would be worth it?

Poor guy, he ended up with only lentil soup! He didn't even get what he thought he was bargaining for.

Did he not believe anyone would take this little incident seriously? Did he think no one saw? God saw!

Gen. 25:34 sums up the story in these words, "Thus Esau despised his birthright." = He counted it worthless.

This is what Esau thought of the promise and blessing of God!

Why did Jacob buy the birthright from Esau?

It must be that, in spite of all his faults, he valued the promise and the blessing of God.

And, this will make all the difference... it is the difference between the believer and the unbeliever.

The believer, the saved person, values and desires above all else the blessing and promise of God.

He might be a fink, a liar, a cheater, a tax collector, a prostitute, a traitor... but when he discovers a way to God he takes it.

He is like a man who, when he finds a treasure in a field, goes and sells all that he has in order to get the field.

Being God's people is neither about being nice or being good... though those are nice and good things...

Being God's people is about trusting God for His promises and seeking Him above all else.

Nothing compares to God and His promises and God's blessing.

So, we see that God chooses who He wants... He chooses you...

Not because you're great. Not because of your stellar character. Not due to your accomplishments.

He chooses you so that He can show His love to you in keeping His promises and blessing you forever...

So that all will see what God does for those He chooses to love.

And, one of the things that happens in those who God loves and chooses is that they love Him and value His promise and blessing.

"We love God because He first loved us." (1 Jn. 4:19)