

Have you ever wanted the Bible to be different than it is?

I think that for the student of the Scriptures this is a common experience, though it seems a little embarrassing to admit it.

I would like to always like the Bible... to think and feel at every point, "Yes! God, that is exactly right!"

But, I don't feel like that, and I struggle to think that at times.

In the Bible, the careful reader gets disappointed, convicted of sin, confronted with a God who is different than expected.

One often feels like things are not going how they ought to go.

Some who you think ought to be heroes turn out not to be heroes, and real heroes die.

Horrible things happen that you think God ought to stop... and, often, there is a significant "yuck" factor.

The Bible is not cleaned up. It is not nice. It is not fantasy. It is not fiction. It is real.

Have you ever wanted life to be different than it is?

I think that for the student life this is a common experience.

I would like to always like life... to think and feel at every point, "Yes! God, that is exactly right!"

But, I don't feel like that, and I struggle to think that at times.

In life, a person often gets disappointed, convicted of sin, confronted with a God who is different than expected.

One often feels like things are not going how they ought to go.

Some who you think ought to be heroes turn out not to be heroes, and real heroes die.

Horrible things happen that you think God ought to stop... and, often, there is a significant "yuck" factor.

Life is not cleaned up. It is not nice. It is not fantasy. It is not fiction. It is real.

The Bible is like life.

And, yet, we find that the Bible gives us a way to understand life because it interprets it.

Throughout the Scriptures, we find a consistent lesson even in the most difficult parts.

### **Even when God's people mess up, God gets it right.**

Now, in this story, the reader is disappointed. It is impossible not to be.

We are reading along in our Bibles...

Adam sins... he messes up and rebels against God. Yes, we know that he is not a hero.

Cain kills his brother Abel... that's bad, and then things get worse.

Noah, however, is a righteous man... but then, at the end, he disappoints us. That's hard to read.

But with Abraham things seem like they might be beginning to change.

We read that "he believed God and God reckoned it to him as righteousness." He's a man of faith.

Sure, he's not perfect, but God makes him a promise and he's learning to follow God.

Then comes his son, Isaac, and his two sons, Esau and Jacob, and things seem to get off to a difficult start.

It is in this chapter that we realize that they are not going to get better.

And, yet, God's plan and purpose remains undeterred...

in spite of plans people make...

in spite of incompetence...

in spite of sin...

in spite of those who ought to be heroes not acting at all like heroes, or even people that God should bless.

God's purpose is to bless Isaac and to bless Jacob. God said so to Rebekah in **Gen. 25:23**

We begin this morning with Esau and Isaac. **Gen. 26:34-27:4**

Isaac says he is old and ready to die. In fact, we will find that he will linger on for another 80 years,

and he will do almost nothing... certainly nothing much to help his two sons.

In chapter 26 it is the Philistines who seem to understand more about God than Isaac does.

We already know that he plays favorites with his sons. He likes Esau better.

Now we see him sitting around demanding food... but Rebekah is listening.

### **I. The deception planned vss. 5-17**

So, Rebekah comes up with a plot to deceive her husband. Don't do that.

And, Jacob's only problem with the plan is that if daddy finds out he'll get in real trouble and be cursed.

Neither of them seem to experience the least bit of moral struggle in doing something that is clearly wrong.

### **II. The deception carried out vss. 18-29**

Now we discover that Isaac is not a father who is particularly tuned into his family.

Three times he has some doubt as to who is really there feeding him...

vss. 20 when Jacob simply lies outright, using God as a part of his lie.

It just about makes you want to puke. Is not this taking the Lord's name in vain?

vs. 21-23 when Isaac feels the goat hair... that cannot possibly feel very much like a person.

We wonder, just how dim is Isaac? Could this ever work with a sensible person?

vs. 24-27 when Jacob actually gets close and serves him and kisses him...

Isaac apparently cannot tell the difference between goat stew and a wild game feed.

There is nothing admirable here.

So, then Isaac blesses Jacob.

Before, in Gen. 25:27-34, Esau sells Jacob his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup.

Esau despised his birthright... probably having to do mostly with inheritance.

Now, Jacob, again taking advantage of his brother and using deception, takes his blessing as well.

But, it is a strange blessing, a blessing of prosperity, protection, and ruling over his brother.

It seems to not be very similar to the Abrahamic blessing... but God will make it clear later that that is exactly what it is.

Blessing Jacob has been God's plan all along... but one wonders, "How could it happen this way?"

### III. The fruits of deception

Jacob leaves. Esau comes in... and things are as bad as we imagine... worse.

We find that Esau has two reactions.

#### A. Agony vss. 30-40

The two of them figure out what has happened... and have different reactions.

Isaac "trembled with a great trembling" and then seems oddly resigned to the whole situation.

In fact, he seems to hardly care for Esau.

Esau, on the other hand, is devastated, and also seems to look at things with a certain inevitability. (vs. 36)

He begs for a blessing... and he gets one.

But, what a horrible blessing it is... it is almost a curse. It reminds us of what Ishmael got from Abraham.

And, in it we see one of the results of Jacob's actions... strife between brothers. **Heb. 12:12-17**

#### B. Anger vss. 41-45

I suppose we can understand this. Esau vows to kill Jacob... and he probably can.

But, he vows to do it after his father dies... which is 80 years away. But everyone seems to think it's coming soon.

Here he is plotting murder. This reminds us of Cain, and it is meant to.

Rebekah knows that he means to do it and plans to send Jacob away... for a few days.

Apparently, she does not think much of Esau's memory. How shortsighted and dense is he?

What a mess!

So, Esau; a stupid, shortsighted, ungodly brute, neither bright nor wise; is contemplating murder of his brother.

Jacob; cunning, underhanded, a liar, a cheat, and a thief, robbing his own brother; has stolen the blessing of God from his father.

Rebekah; conniving, teaching horrible lessons to her son, unsupporting of her husband; has planned the whole thing.

And Isaac; blind, insensible, wondering about his own death way too early, a horrible father and leader of his family; gets duped.

Isaac does get one thing right. He trusts God. **Heb. 11:20** He realized what God was doing and trusted Him.

These are not nice people and they are not good. And, this is precisely the point.

God saves people who are not very nice and not very good... and it is a good thing that He does, or we would all be doomed.

This is the message to those people in the wilderness who heard this the first time it was written.

"Look people, you are neither good nor nice, and God saved you!"

Over and over in the Bible, God identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What's the point of that?

Surely, it is not that God is the sort of God who chooses and saves heroes.

Maybe we could get by with that with Abraham... OK, he's a pretty stellar guy, but with some problems.

But, Isaac? Jacob? What does it mean that He's the God of them?

It must mean that He's the sort of God who saves losers and liars! Is this not exactly what Jesus does on the cross?

He came to save sinners, not saints. He came for those who need a physician, not for those who think they don't.

And, it means that even when God's people are a mess, and they make a mess... God's plans are not thwarted.

Of course, God had made the prophetic promise to Rebekah and He was going to make good on what He had said.

He always does.

And, things might have gone much better had not Jacob taken things into his own hands...

Somehow Jacob would have received the promise, and he could have had a blessed relationship with his brother.

But, sin always does damage. God always carries out His plans and sin always does its damage.

So, I want to leave you with two questions this morning...

### IV. What is God calling you to? How are you going about getting it?

If you are His, if you are here today and God is speaking to you, calling you to Himself... He has a plan for your life.

He has a plan for blessing and not a curse. He wants to use you in His kingdom. And, He will.

But, you can make it much easier for yourself and more pleasant if you obey Him and live according to wisdom and His commands.

It is the better way.

But, some of you are inclined to learn the hard way. You are like Jacob, going your way and not thinking much about God's way.

Some of you have already learned the pain of God's call mixed with ignoring God's way.

You've been through the pain and sin and misery and all the hard lessons for many years and are only now beginning to see...

You've been at the parties, in the relationships, pursuing money, popularity, lying, stealing... "having fun"

It is not fun... but God can work that way too, if He has to. If you want to learn that way, you can.

Either way, know this, God is in charge... whether you know it or not.