

23. A soap opera in the Bible

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Days of Our Lives, Passions, As the World Turns, Guiding Light, One Life to Live, General Hospital, Young and the Restless and All My Children. What do they have in common? Yes, they are soap operas.

I am sure that you all noticed that none of the people in soap opera works, yet they are all rich. They throw parties, take vacations, stand around talk anytime they want. If one character is dead, out of blue, his or her identical twin shows up. The sexual activities of all the character is so complicated that it requires computer to trace who slept with whom.

Of course, they all are handsome, well-built men and slender, beautiful women. They get up out of bed in the morning with every hair in the place and all the make up done. How do they do that?

They have a interesting way to converse with one another. One person faces the camera and the other person stands behind one's back and carries out the conversation. When was last time you talk to the back of somebody's head? The reason is that they are such bad actors and actresses and they cannot memorize their lines, so they have to read.

You are wondering where this preacher is going with this? Well, I just have to unload the stupidity of soap opera before I get to the point. The each character in soap opera are exaggerated to make their plot more exciting. But we are about to see four main characters in chapter 26 and 27 who seem like living in soap opera without exaggeration.

A. GOD'S PROMISE TO ISAAC

Genesis 26:1-5 There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar. 2 Then the Lord appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. 4 And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5 because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

Even though Abraham's life shows that his obedience wasn't complete or constant, God can say this of Abraham because Abraham was declared righteous by faith.

Addition to that, God gives definite instructions to Isaac at the time of famine. And He confirms the covenant which He had made with Abraham.

B. LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Genesis 26:6-11 So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. 7 And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold." 8 Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked

through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife. 9 Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Quite obviously she is your wife; so how could you say, 'She is my sister'?" And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.'" 10 And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us." 11 So Abimelech charged all his people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

Isaac went from such a high spiritual experience with God to such a low horrible sin because of the weakness of his own flesh, and also because of the bad example of his father.

On the contrary to some theologians, the Bible doesn't teach we are bound by "Generational Curses." But it is often the case that the sins of the fathers are found in the children, because those sins of the flesh have been nurtured in that environment.

In addition to that, the main idea of Generational Curses is nothing more than pointing finger to someone else to blame our own willful sins.

As Christians, we don't have to repeat our parents' sins, nor stay in the areas of our own. When we come to Jesus, we are new creations in Christ, for old things have passed away and all things become new.

A little lie is a lot like a little pregnancy. Either a woman is pregnant or she isn't. Besides, as time goes by, it grows bigger. Our ability to lie is our liability to sin.

C. GOT WATER?

Genesis 26:12-25 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. 13 The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; 14 for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him. 15 Now the Philistines had stopped up all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth. 16 And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we." 17 Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. 18 And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them. 19 Also Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there. 20 But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him. 21 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also. So he called its name Sitnah. 22 And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, "For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." 23 Then he went up from there to Beersheba. 24 And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake." 25 So he built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

In the last paragraph, we saw Isaac sinned against God with his deception. But we don't see any of God's punishment against him. Did Isaac go scott free on that? No, he will be deceived terribly by his own son later. Remember, God's millstone grind slowly, but it grinds exceedingly fine.

The first well was named 'Esek' which means "contention," because it made others jealous. The next well was named 'Sitnah' which means "hostility" for similar reasons. But the third well was named 'Rehoboth' which means "roominess," because it was far enough away to not be a problem.

God used the conflicts to lead Isaac back to Beersheba, where Abraham had been before. God doesn't want us to live in contention and hostility, but they can be used by God to lead us to the place where He wants us to be.

Isaac could easily put up for a fight. But he chose to back off to keep peace between him and Abimelech.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

D. MAKING PEACE WITH NEIGHBOR

Genesis 26:26-35 Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phichol the commander of his army. 27 And Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?" 28 But they said, "We have certainly seen that the Lord is with you. So we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you, 29 that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the Lord.' " 30 So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. 31 Then they arose early in the morning and swore an oath with one another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. 32 It came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water." 33 So he called it Shebah. Therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day. 34 When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. 35 And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

Although Isaac almost seems weak in his dealing with the men of Gerar, the king of Gerar was so impressed that he followed Isaac to Beer-sheba in order to establish peace. The influence of Isaac in that land was not that of a weak man.

Pr 16:7 When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Esau didn't care about the God of his parents, nor their wishes. It is no wonder God hated him.

E. A DECLINING FATHER

Genesis 27:1-4 Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." And he answered him, "Here I am." 2 Then he said, "Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. 3 Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and

hunt game for me. 4 And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die."

Isaac was about 137 years old at this point, yet he acted as though he would die very soon. Actually, he lived to be 180. By the time Isaac died, he probably buried all of his doctors.

Isaac's impatience to give the blessing to Esau suggests that he was following his own carnal plans, not God's will. Had he forgotten the Word from God in chapter 25 regarding the older shall serve the younger? Or was he trying to change God's plan? Note how he depended on his senses – feeling, eating and smelling. Note also that feeding the body took priority over doing God's will. Isaac at one time laid himself on the altar and was willing to die for the Lord at the Mount Moriah. What a change!

F. A DOUBTING MOTHER

Genesis 27:5-10 Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. 6 So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, 7 Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death.' 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. 9 Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. 10 Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death."

Rebekah had been told by God that Jacob would receive God's blessing. Yet she schemed and plotted to make sure that Esau was left out. Instead of going to God in prayer as she had years before, she depended on her own plans, a practice that would be characteristic of Jacob in later years.

She went about to "do what is right" in the flesh. Good intentions don't justify acting in the flesh. I am sure you've noticed that in this house, no one trusted anyone else.

G. A DECEIVING SON

Genesis 27:11-29 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. 12 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing." 13 But his mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me." 14 And he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

Jacob's only concern is a success or failure of this con-job. He didn't worry about whether it is a right thing to do or not.

When we are willing to abandon the question of right and wrong, and when our only concern is "what works," we have bought into the modern idea of 'pragmatism', as much of the church has today.

The worst part of the whole things is that none of them thought that the owner and dispenser of the blessing is God. Without Him, there is no blessing.

Genesis 27:18-29 So he went to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." 20 But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me." 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. 24 Then he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am." 25 He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." 27 And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field Which the Lord has blessed. 28 Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. 29 Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"

Apparently the deodorant that Esau was using was not working well.

There were two men who were working in a very tight place. One of them finally said to the other one, "Wow! I think the deodorant of one of us has quit working." The other fellow answered, "It must be yours because I don't use any!" I don't think that Esau used any either, and I'm not sure he had a shower very often. Even if you couldn't see Esau, you could smell him.

Please note what Jacob said to his father. He didn't hesitate to use the name of God in his deception. How can he do this? Simply because his only concern is "whatever it takes." Since he knows God wants him to have the birthright, he will justify any lie or sin he commits in the pursuit of the birthright and say he is making a stand for righteousness.

It doesn't matter what kind of excuses we may come up with to justify our own sins.

Numbers 32:23b You have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.

H. A DESPAIRING BROTHER

Genesis 27:30-36 Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me." 32 And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." 33 Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him--and indeed he shall be blessed." 34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter

cry, and said to his father, "Bless me--me also, O my father!" 35 But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." 36 And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" 37 Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?" 38 And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me--me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

Isaac was troubled because he knew he had tried to box God in, to defeat God's plan, and God had beaten him.

He realized he would always be defeated when he tried to resist God's will, even when he didn't like it.

Both Isaac and Esau are grieved when they figure out what Jacob did, and now Esau is concerned about the birthright. Previously in Genesis 25, he was willing to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew, and he despised his birthright. Now he wanted the material and political advantages of the birthright.

Genesis 27:39-46 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above. 40 By your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck." 41 So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob." 42 And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. 44 And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, 45 until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?" 46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

Rebekah paid dearly for her sin. She never saw her son Jacob again.

I. APPLICATIONS

1) We must do godly things in God's way in God's time, not ours.

2) Good intentions don't justify acting in the flesh.

Numbers 32:23b You have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.

3) Just because we've been Christians for some time, it doesn't mean that we won't fall for temptations.