

37. Desperately dysfunctional family

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The Bold and the Beautiful, Days of Our Lives, General Hospital, and The Young and the Restless. What do they have in common? Yes, they are soap operas. I am sure that you all noticed none of the people in soap operas work, yet they are all rich. They throw parties, take vacations, stand around talk anytime they want. If one character is dead, don't worry. Out of the blue, his or her identical twin shows up. The sexual activities of all the characters are so complicated that it requires a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet 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 makeup done. How do they do that?

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

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. Each character in the soap opera is exaggerated to make their plot more exciting. But we are about to see four main characters in chapter 27 who seem like living in soap opera without exaggeration.

We have the spiritually declining father who tried to outsmart God's will; the doubting mother who tried to force the hands of God; the despairing older son who could care less about God; the deceiving younger son who deceived his own father for God's blessing instead of waiting upon Him. We can learn a lot from these people.

A. 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 is about to die very soon. Actually, he lived 43 more years after this. By the time Isaac died, he probably buried all of his doctors.

When he was young, Isaac was a dedicated godly man who had put himself on the altar in obedience to the Lord. He trusted God to choose his wife for him. Both Isaac and Rebekah knew how to pray and seek the mind of the Lord for their home. What more could a married couple want? But a good beginning does not guarantee a good ending. In the latter part of his years, Isaac tried to reverse the blessing of God for a savory meal of venison from his favorite son Esau.

25 regarding the older shall serve the younger? Or was he trying to change God's plan? Note that feeding the body took priority over doing God's will. With a father like that leading the home, is it any wonder that the family fell apart?

We need to remember this: We must follow the will of God, not ours, even if we don't like it. Eventually, we will learn that it is best for us.

B. 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.

Rebekah 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 family, no one trusted anyone else. The NT on this scene is James 3:13-18. Isaac was depending on his own physical senses, but Rebekah was depending on her good idea of the world. However, the world's good idea very often leads to trouble.

James 3:16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

C. 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. 18 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 rec-

ognize 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!"

Jacob's concern wasn't "Is it right?" but "Is it safe?" He was worried about the eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt not get caught."

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.

Pragmatism has roots in Darwinism and secular humanism. It is connected to relativism, rejecting the notion of absolute right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error. Pragmatism ultimately defines truth as that which is useful, meaningful, helpful. Ideas that don't seem workable or relevant are rejected as false. That's why some so-called Christians who subscribe to this crazy idea can accept abortion with women's rights.

The worst part of the whole thing is that none of them thought that the owner and dispenser of the blessing is God. Without Him, there is no blessing. And when we don't have the truth in our hearts and follow His truth, we don't get His blessings.

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 says he is making a stand for righteousness. There is a Greek word for that – "Hogwash."

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.

In our last study, I told you that it seems like Isaac got away without any consequence after he lied about the relationship between him and his wife to Abimelech of Philistia. And I also told you guys that Isaac got his consequences later with being deceived by his own son. Here it is. Again remember this: God's millstone grinds slowly, but it grinds exceedingly fine.

D. A DESPAIRING BROTHER

Genesis 27:30-46 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. 39 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?"

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

Esau who despised his birthright and married two pagan women now wept and cried out for his father to bless him. It wasn't his fault, of course; it was his crafty brother's fault. When in doubt, always blame somebody else. Esau's tears were not tears of repentance for being an ungodly man; they were tears of regret because he had lost the covenant blessing.

Both Isaac and Esau are grieved when they figure out what Jacob did, and now Esau is concerned about the birthright. Previously in chapter 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.

Esau's attitude reminds me of what the unbelievers would do when they find out that they cannot enter into heaven because they chose not to follow Jesus while they were alive. It is not anyone's fault except themselves for not choosing Jesus as the Savior and Lord.

Rebekah paid dearly for her sin. Her "few days" turned out to be 20 years, and she never saw Jacob again on earth.

E. 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.