

## CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – Genesis 25:19 – 26:35

### Read Genesis 25:19-34

-How long did Isaac and Rebekah have to wait before having children? What does this teach us about prayer?

- waited 20 years (Isaac married at 40 (v.20); had Esau & Jacob at 60 (v.26))
- Isaac was praying in line with God's will, since he knew it was through his offspring that God's promise to Abraham would be reckoned
  - but still had to pray and persist in prayer – likely for many years
  - God answers prayer in His timing, and according to His good purposes → perseverance in prayer, even when it seems God is not answering
- God may not always answer prayer as we think he ought – Rebekah had a difficult pregnancy

-How does the birth of Jacob & Esau parallel Isaac's own birth?

- both occurred through God's intervention, after a long period of barrenness

-What is the meaning of the prophecy given to Rebekah in v.23? What does this prophecy teach us about God? (cf. Romans 9:10-16)

- prophecy that she would have twins, and that 2 nations would be descended from these 2 boys (ultimately, Edom & Israel)
  - the younger would dominate the older, i.e. Jacob (Israel) would be stronger than Esau (Edom)
- the prophecy speaks of God's choosing of the younger (Jacob) over the older (Esau), ultimately as the one who would inherit His promises to Abraham
  - speaks of God's sovereignty in election (Rom 9)
    - He chooses whom He will; to have mercy on whom He will have mercy, in accordance with His will
    - not by merit or works, since choice was made before either had done anything good or bad (Rom 9:11-12), but for God's purposes
    - similar, His choice in salvation does not depend on our desire or effort, but on His mercy (Rom. 9:16), and according to His purposes in election (Rom 9:11)
    - [aside – apart from His regenerating work in our lives, none would have that desire for Him anyways]

-What kind of person was Jacob, as seen in this passage?

- name means 'he grasps the heel' or 'supplanter/deceiver'
- came out grasping Esau's heel – a picture of the kind of man he would be (grasping Esau's heel to trip him up)
- a quiet man, stayed around the tents → loved by Rebekah
- a shrewd schemer – took advantage of situation (maybe even planned to be there when Esau got back) to get what he wanted
- aggressive, self-seeking
- but unlike Esau, he saw the value of the birthright, though perhaps with wrong motivations

-What kind of person was Esau (see also Gen. 26:34-35)? What was the significance of his birthright, and what does it mean that he 'despised his birthright'?

- Esau – name may mean 'hairy'; also called Edom ('red')
- a man of the open country; a skillful hunter → loved by Isaac
- birthright = a place of special honor; came with promise of future blessing
  - often came with double portion of the inheritance (e.g. Deut. 21:15-17)
  - more importantly in this case, came with potential to inherit God's promises made to Abraham
- a man who lived for the here & now; cared nothing about things unseen or future
  - traded a promise of significant future blessing for immediate gratification/pleasure – and a ridiculously small amount at that! (a single meal)
  - Bible calls him a godless man (Heb 12:16)
  - married Canaanite wives – contrary to Abraham's command that Isaac not marry a Canaanite woman

-What warning does the Bible give us from Esau's example (Hebrews 12:14-17), and how does this apply to us today? (you might also consider 1 Peter 1:3-9,13-21)

- warning not to be godless and throw away all we have in Christ for things that pass away; rather, cling to Him, whatever the cost
  - many possible applications
- in Christ, we have an eternal inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, so should live in light of that (1 Peter 1:3-9,13-16)
  - we should not to return to the empty way of life handed down to us from our forefathers (1 Peter 1:18), but instead should be holy, living our lives as strangers here, in reverent fear

### Read Genesis 26:1-35

-What similarities to Abraham's life are seen in this account of the life of Isaac?

- both went through famine that caused them to consider going to Egypt (Abraham went)
- both were assured by God of land, descendants, and blessing for the earth
- both had similar weakness - lied about the relationship to their wives for fear of their lives
- both were rebuked by pagan kings and were protected by them by God's sovereignty
  - Abimelech shows up in both Abraham's & Isaac's accounts – probably not the same person, but a descendant with the same name
- both remained faithful and lived in obedience and worship to God as a general rule of their lives

-What did God promise to Isaac, and why? (v.3-5, 24; cf. Gen. 12:1-3, 13:14-16, 17:19) Did Abraham's obedience "buy" God's favor for Isaac? (v.5)

- God confirms/confers to Isaac the promises He made to Abraham
  - to be with him and bless him
  - to give to him and his descendants the land
  - to make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky
  - to bless all nations on earth through his offspring

Why?

- God is faithful to His promises; had promised these things to Abraham, and had promised to establish same covenant with Isaac (17:19)
- "because Abraham obeyed" (v.5) or "for the sake of my servant Abraham" (v.24)
  - God's promised blessings were not 'earned' by Abraham's obedience, but were entirely by God's grace
  - yet, the promises were appropriated through faith that showed itself in obedience (Rom 4, Gal 3, Heb 11:8-19, James 2:20-24)
    - as a result, these promises were given not only to Abraham, but also to all who are of that same faith – Abraham, the father of faith
  - God perhaps also commending Abraham's obedience to Isaac, and encouraging him to that same obedience
- reminds us that God shows kindness to generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments (v.5, cf. Exodus 20:5-6)
- Aside on "because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, commands, my decrees and my laws." (v.6)
  - Abraham was very careful to obey God (not just His requirements, but also commands, decrees, laws – repeated for emphasis)

-Abimelech saw clearly that the LORD was with Isaac to bless him (v.28-29). In what ways do we see God's blessing on Isaac's life in this chapter?

- protection of Isaac & Rebekah from Abimelech and his men (v.8-11), and from the herdsmen of Gerar (v.20-21)
- blessed him with abundant crops and wealth (v.12-13)
- kept enabling him to find water, wherever he went (v.18, 19, 21, 22, 32)
- appeared to him to reassure and comfort him (v.2-5, 24)

-Many Christians believe that a life blessed by God means one that is free of hardships and suffering. Did God's blessing on Isaac's life guarantee him freedom from hardship and suffering?

- no, it did not
- Isaac's obedience to God in not going to Egypt resulted in blessing, but also in trials and testing of his faith (e.g. fear for his life; persecution by the Philistines, thus being forced to go from place to place)
- God did not deliver Isaac from hardship, but through hardship
  - consistent with Scriptures that speak of testing of faith as discipline → stronger, refined faith (e.g. James 1; 1 Peter 1)

-While Isaac is the patriarch given the least space in Genesis, what do we learn about his character in this chapter?

- similar to Abraham in many respects; parallels to Abraham's life in this chapter appear deliberately placed to draw attention to similarities
  - like Abraham, walked by faith, which resulted in obedience to God; believed God's promise to bless; therefore did not go to Egypt
  - had some of the same weaknesses as Abraham; similar lapse, with respect to lying about his wife for fear of his life
- humble and gracious
  - seen in his dealings with the herdsmen of Gerar – their claims to the water were ludicrous (especially since the land in reality belonged to Isaac and his descendants anyways), yet Isaac yielded to them and moved on, rather than asserting his 'rights'
    - similar in some respects to Abram's dealings with Lot in Genesis 13
  - dealt graciously with Abimelech, even after Abimelech told him to move away – provided a feast and gave what they requested
- a man who followed God
  - credits God with providing room (v.22); builds an altar and calls on the name of the LORD (v.25); seen even by pagans to be blessed by the LORD (v.29)
- husband of one wife

### Aliens and strangers in the world

Isaac was a man of faith, who inherited God's promises to Abraham, the father of faith. As Isaac's firstborn, Esau's birthright was to inherit all those same blessings; yet, he despised these and sold them for a single meal. "History shows us that men prefer illusions to realities, choose time rather than eternity, and the pleasures of sin for a season rather than the joys of God forever. Men will read trash rather than the Word of God, and adhere to a system of priorities that leaves God out of their lives. Multitudes of men spend more time shaving than on their souls; and multitudes of women give more minutes to their makeup than to the life of the eternal spirit. Men still sell their birthright for a mess of pottage." (Donald Barnhouse)

Consider your life and your walk this evening. Are you, by your priorities and way of life, selling out your birthright for worthless things? Repent, and learn to live a life worthy of the calling you have received in Christ. "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:13-16)