

## Genesis 28A (2011)

- Throughout our study of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob, I've remarked on the way God has maintained His sovereign control over all events
  - But at the same time, each person has made sinful choices that rest entirely on their own shoulders
    - Since sin has consequences, and God will bring those consequences to each person
    - As Chapter 27 ends and we move into Chapter 28, we're watching how those consequences play out
  - But God's sovereignty never ends, so that even in the way the consequences of sin play out, God is still bringing events to an appointed outcome
    - We must remember Jacob has not become the holder of the covenant with God
    - He holds the promises of God and the patriarchal authority
    - How does God remain faithful to His promises even while He holds Jacob accountable for his deception?
      - Chapter 28 gives us those answers
  - More importantly, we begin a new phase in Jacob's life
    - Jacob is a man who has learned to deceive and scheme to get his way
    - He has a lot of spiritual growth ahead of him, a lot to learn about the God of his fathers
      - God is going to use Jacob's sin and the sin of others to mold him into a man who trusts God beyond even his own schemes
- First, we end Chapter 27 witnessing the consequences of Jacob's deception

**Gen. 27:41** So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

[Gen. 27:42](#) Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you.

[Gen. 27:43](#) "Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!

[Gen. 27:44](#) "Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides,

[Gen. 27:45](#) until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

[Gen. 27:46](#) Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

- Following the deception of Isaac in the tent, Esau bore a grudge against his brother
  - The Hebrew word for grudge is a curious one
    - It provides yet another fulfillment of God's eternal decrees
    - The word literally means hostility against someone or to persecute someone
  - Remember we said that Esau is a picture of the unbeliever throughout history
    - He represents the natural, sinful man who is born of the seed of the serpent, ungodly and worldly
    - He is excluded from the blessings and promises of God, because he despises the word of God
    - He experiences worldly sorrow, but never knows the repentance that comes from God only
    - And he will persecute the children of God, because there will always be enmity between the seed of woman and the seed of the serpent
  - So here we see that enmity and persecution taking hold just as God promised
- Esau says to himself that he will kill Jacob once his father Isaac has died
  - Esau knew better than to kill his brother while Isaac was still alive

- If he committed murder while Isaac was still the patriarch, he would have been put to death by Isaac's command
- But if he waited until Isaac had died, then with Jacob dead as well, Esau would become the family patriarch
- And as the male head of the clan, Esau could avoid death
- Remember we mentioned a few lessons back that Isaac isn't as close to death as everyone is assuming
  - Isaac himself set that expectation as an excuse to award the birthright secretly
  - But we know that Isaac lives another 43 years after these events, so his death is not imminent at all
  - Esau has a very long time to wait, but neither he nor anyone else is thinking that way at this point
- Rebekah learns of Esau's plan somehow, perhaps through a servant, and once again she jumps into action to protect Jacob
  - Isn't it interesting how Rebekah consistently finds herself privy to helpful information on Jacob's behalf?
    - It sure seems that God is speaking to Rebekah in order to keep Jacob one step ahead of his enemies
    - I think I recognize a pattern here that I've seen in my own life and in the lives of other men
  - When the man in the family isn't listening to God, He speaks to the woman who does hear Him
    - And the woman will find herself in the uncomfortable position of knowing what should be done while living with a man who won't do it or ignores it
    - And she then bears the burden of making things right according to God's revelation while contending with a disobedient husband
  - Here we see Rebekah standing in Isaac's place time and time again
    - She received God's revelation concerning the twins
    - Then she was given the knowledge of Isaac's secret plans

- Now she learns of Esau's conspiracy
  - God gives Rebekah these moments of insight because the same revelation in Isaac's hands has lead nowhere, apparently
- Throughout scripture, we will find this pattern repeated
  - It started in the Garden, when Adam failed in the garden while woman did her best to defend God's word
  - It repeats many times in Israel's history, including with Naomi in the story of Ruth, with Deborah in the time of Judges and others
    - In every case, the need for women to take the lead in pursuing righteousness in place of the men is portrayed as shameful and a failure of headship
    - Not that woman can't lead or aren't permitted to pursue righteousness apart from men
      - Obviously women can lead at times and women stand as equals with men in pursuing the righteousness through Christ
    - But when a man and woman of faith are united in marriage, the role for leading spiritually falls to the husband
      - And if the man stumbles in that role, the woman is there to help pick him up and encourage him forward
      - But in times when the man abdicates his leadership role or neglects it, he leaves God no choice sometimes but to speak through his wife
      - The man is still accountable to God, but the Lord may use the wife to reveal the man's sin
  - I've seen this pattern in my own life, and often my wife will hear the Lord's voice clearly when I've stopped listening
    - And the Lord will use my wife to break through my stubbornness
    - Earlier in my marriage, when God would prepare us to move to new places, I often wouldn't be listening
    - So He told my wife to start packing...

- Now when I see boxes, I start listening more closely
- Rebekah goes to Jacob and warns him of Esau's plans
  - She says that Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you
    - Esau can't act yet, but he feels better contemplating killing Jacob
    - And Rebekah doesn't want to take the chance that Esau will get tired of waiting for Isaac to die and attack Jacob
  - Her plan is to send Jacob away temporarily
    - But where can she send him?
    - She must send him to a family member, otherwise Jacob would be at risk as a wanderer
      - The nearest relatives are 450 miles away in Haran
      - Rebekah has a brother Laban living in Haran, so she tells Jacob this is far enough away to ensure safety
  - Rebekah tells Jacob that the separation will only be a few days, but we need to understand times references from their cultural perspective
    - It would take several weeks just to travel to Haran and then several weeks to return
      - Plus, she couldn't have expected Esau's desire to kill Jacob to disappear in a week or two
    - So when she says Jacob will go there for a "few days," she means months
    - She says she will call for him when Esau's anger blows over
- Rebekah's expectations were decidedly optimistic
  - First, notice how she avoids any reference to her own culpability in this situation
    - She paints the entire episode as Jacob's fault, Jacob's deception
    - And then she suggests that the hole she dug by her scheming can be easily filled in with a little time and distance
  - In reality, Rebekah's suggestion is exactly what God desires for reasons of His own

- But the plan will also serve to chastise Rebekah for her part in this family tragedy
- Notice in v.45 Rebekah asks why should she be bereaved of both her sons in a day?
  - She is referring to her fear that Esau would kill Jacob and then Isaac would have Esau put to death for the murder
  - So in her mind, she is saving both boys
- Then notice in v.46 she plants the idea in Isaac to send Jacob to Laban's to find a wife
  - She expects Isaac to agree and solve her problem
- As it turns out, there is great irony in these statements
  - Rebekah expected her plan would ensure she kept Jacob by her side
    - But by her plan, she loses her favored son, Jacob
    - He won't be in Haran for a few days...he'll be there for 20 years
    - And Rebekah will die while he's gone
  - And Rebekah's excuse to send Jacob away actually becomes the real reason God sent Jacob to Haran
    - God uses Jacob's time in Haran to give him a family
    - But God also uses Rebekah's excuse as the mechanism to discipline her for her sin
      - Jacob's pursuit of a wife becomes the reason Jacob can't return in time to see Rebekah again
      - His commitment to his future wife prevents him from leaving

**Gen. 28:1** So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

**Gen. 28:2** "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

**Gen. 28:3** "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.

**Gen. 28:4** "May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."

[Gen. 28:5](#) Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

- Rebekah's suggestion to Isaac worked as expected, and he commands Jacob to go to Haran
  - Isaac sends Jacob away with a command
    - Like Isaac's father Abraham did before him, Isaac charges Jacob with not taking a wife from among the Canaanites
      - This stipulation comes from God's own command to Abraham originally not to intermarry with the people in the land
      - Abraham and the people under God's covenant were to remain separate from the people of the land
      - And if they intermarried, God said it would result in the corruption of Abraham's people
    - So Jacob is sent back to his mother's family to find a wife
  - And Jacob receives another blessing as well
    - In keeping with the Abrahamic covenant, Isaac blesses Jacob with the fruitfulness that God promised to Abraham and Isaac
    - But now the blessing has changed
      - Jacob was to become a company of peoples
    - Abraham and Isaac never receive such a promise
      - They were promised to have many descendants
      - But they themselves had small families with only one son to carry the promise
    - Now Isaac declares that Jacob is blessed to have a large family of his own
  - Furthermore, Isaac confirms that Jacob carries the promises of God to inherit this land
    - Not only would Jacob inherit the land personally, but so would his descendants

- Those who are included in the promise of God will share in these blessings
- Let's reflect a little on Jacob's life for a moment
  - He was appointed by God before his birth to be the child of the promise, the holder of the birthright that contained God's covenant
    - Like Abraham and Isaac before him, Jacob alone would carry this special set of promises from God
    - Jacob would have the blessing of God's protection and promises of eternal inheritance and earthly blessing
  - Through a twisted set of circumstances, the birthright came to Jacob, and now here he stands ready to leave home under difficult circumstances to seek a wife
    - We have no record of Jacob ever encountering God personally
    - We know he has a faithful testimony, but we have to wonder what did Jacob really understand about this special set of promises?
    - In fact, he might conclude that up to this point, they have been nothing but trouble though he had faith in them
  - Jacob is about to start down a path of spiritual maturity, one in which he learns what it means to be in covenant with the living God
    - Yet Jacob will forever be a sinful man with many flaws and weaknesses
- Before we move into that journey of spiritual growth, Moses gives us another glimpse of Esau and his heart
  - Now that Jacob has been sent away, Esau sees another opportunity to gain Dad's favor

**[Gen. 28:6](#)** Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,"

**[Gen. 28:7](#)** and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram.

**[Gen. 28:8](#)** So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; **[Gen. 28:9](#)** and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

- Esau watched as Isaac gave Jacob yet another blessing as Jacob departed for Haran
  - We remember that Esau's anger at his brother was a result of his frustration over not having an inheritance of his father's blessing
    - Esau witnesses this moment when Isaac blesses Jacob again, and the wheels start to turn in Esau's head
    - Esau knows that mom and dad have never been pleased by his decision to take wives from among the Canaanites
    - And he assumes that Isaac must be blessing Jacob here because Jacob obeyed Isaac's request to seek a wife from Rebekah's family
  - So Esau concludes that if he were to do the same thing, he could impress his father and gain some measure of blessing as well
    - Since Esau didn't want to travel 450 miles to Haran (and Jacob was already working that opportunity anyway), Esau does the next best thing
      - He goes to the only other family he has: Ishmael's relatives
      - At this time, Ishmael lived south of Isaac's family in the Sinai peninsula
      - So Esau travels south and returns with his cousin, Ishmael's daughter
    - The text doesn't tell us what Isaac and Rebekah thought of this tactic, but we can certainly make a safe assumption
    - Esau's misguided plan only amplified the family's misery
      - A relative of Ishmael was no better than a daughter of the Canaanites for all the same reasons
      - These were people forsaken by the Lord and outside His blessings
- We learn something very important from watching Esau striving to obtain the impossible

- The unbelieving world is forever counterfeiting the relationships that come only by the grace of God
  - Jacob was a man chosen by God, ordained to receive the blessings of God through faith in the promises of God
    - God brought this about by working through a father, Isaac, to deliver those promises to the chosen son
    - And God continued working throughout both their lives to fulfill His promises, including ensuring they obtained the right wives from the right families at the right time
  - The basis for all their blessings was a relationship with God through a covenant received in faith
    - All that followed in Isaac and Jacob's lives was built on that foundation of faith and relationship
    - Under the sovereign control of God's hand
- Now Esau envied these blessings and desired them for himself
  - But Esau lacked the foundation, the faith in God and His promises
  - Like all unbelievers, Esau had no ability to understand spiritual truths so he could only make sense of his life circumstances from a fleshly, worldly perspective
- So Esau studied the behaviors of Jacob and the words of Isaac and assumed he could gain the same benefits by mimicking those words and actions
  - But it doesn't work that way
  - The works in Jacob's life and the blessings that followed were the result of a relationship with God formed by and through God's word
    - Jacob's works didn't create the relationship, the relationship created the works
  - Likewise, the works that Esau is now pursuing can't substitute for a relationship with God
    - And they can't produce the blessings that only relationship can produce

- This is the pattern of every unbeliever who seeks for what God offers to His children
  - They mimic words and actions, striving in vain to produce by their works something that only comes by faith in God's promises
    - To be saved is to rest in the promises of God
    - And to have a relationship with the loving God by our faith
    - To hear Him and to follow Him and to see Him working in our lives
  - But unbelievers always assume that we do what we do in order to bring God into our lives
    - And some may try to mimic our relationship like Esau did in the text here
    - When we sense that dynamic at work, we need to interrupt their mimicry and in love explain the Gospel to them