

The Troubled Family

Almost everybody, at some point has used the phrase “this is just the way I was raised.”

We live in a time where “blaming someone else” is the most popular excuse of personal weaknesses or dysfunction.

It is common for people to blame their current problems and predicaments on their parents, or how they were brought up.

I don't go to church now because when I was a child ...

My spouse doesn't understand that I am this way because my parents ...

Yes, our parents and our upbringing have greatly influenced every one of us (good and bad) but that does not preclude our ability to draw from the good and overcome the bad.

... I'm not trying to be cavalier but there are three things I know to be true about excuses.

- They require no effort
- They achieve no goals
- They inspire no action

Let's just admit it, you can find problems, weaknesses, and negative things in every home family.

... every home—like every life—is going to have some conflict and trouble.

... this has been the situation since Cain killed Abel.

- The sons of Noah

- Abraham and Lot
- Isaac and Ishmael
- Joseph and his brothers
- And today we are going to see it with Isaac and his wife and well as their sons: Jacob and Esau.

This a troubled family.

... this was not a situation that developed overnight.

... Apparently, things had been going wrong for many years with secret resentment, rivalries, gossiping, and personal loyalties.

Through the Word of God, we are given a window into this trouble family

... and through this window I believe we can learn some things that will help us.

The story opens with Esau (the first born of twins) coming home after a day of being in the field hunting.

1. Esau **DESPISED** the birthright, so God **REJECTED** him. (25:29-34)

²⁸ Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. ²⁹ When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; ³⁰ and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom.³¹ But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." ³² Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?" ³³ And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. (Gen. 25:28-34)

From the first line we see that these two parents have picked a favorite son...

... Isaac loved to eat wild game ... so he picked Esau the hunter.

... Jacob was a mommy's boy ... so Rebekah chose him.

NOW it is important for us to see that in spite of the trouble in this family God's will is being accomplished.

We started reading in verse 28 but back in verse 23 the Lord had told Rebekah that the two sons would be the father/leader of two separate nations

... and that the older son (as well as nation) would eventually serve younger son (and nation.)

Now in this part of the story Esau comes in from hunting and he is tired and hungry.

... when he comes home, he finds that Jacob has just finished cooking some food and Esau wants some.

Jacob says, "I'll give you some in exchange for your birthright" ... that is, the right to be considered the firstborn

... which also means that in time Jacob would be head of the family.

I want you to take notice of two things:

- Esau despises his birthright
- Jacob wants the birthright

This is important because you can see that what these boys desire (in this moment) does not run contrary to what God has planned.

... that the older would serve the

Later when you read God saying "I have loved Jacob but hated Esau" ... and then the Apostle Paul quoting that verse in Romans 9 you need to remember ...

... this was what Esau and Jacob wanted.

Esau, though he had the right to be called the firstborn of this family ... placed more value on a bowl of soup.

... because he despised the birthright, he lost that birthright and ultimately the blessing.

From the outset we can see that this story is not a story of injustice ... but a story about the consequences of priority.

... What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul

... Blessed in the nation whose God is the LORD.

If you despise the salvation that God offers you ... God will reject you. [That is an absolute fact.]

Later we are going to see Esau weeping over his loss ... when we do I want you to remember that Esau lost what he despised.

2. DIVIDED parents produce ADVERSARIAL children (27:1-17)

Isaac had seen the faith of his father Abraham.

Isaac knew of Abraham's close relationship with God.

... and you would think that a boy with such noble DNA, surrounded by such a godly example ...

... that certainly of all people he would emulate what his parents professed and lived...

... But years have passed, and Isaac is now an old man.

(Gen 27:1,2) Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old, and I do not know the day of my death.

... and for Isaac old age seems to be a decline

... Isaac is afraid that his death is imminent

It is interesting to note that Ishmael, Isaac's stepbrother had died at this same age.

... so perhaps Isaac thought that he would die about the same age.

Of course, we find out later that Isaac lived another 43 years.

But as Isaac considered the possibility of his death, I want you to see what he did—he called for Esau.

(Gen 27:3-5)³ "Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; ⁴ and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die." ⁵ Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home,

Isaac's greatest possession was his patriarchal blessing.

... This blessing involved, not just land and property but also the right of the lineage of perpetuity.

... In Jacob's case to be in the direct line as an ancestor of the promised Messiah.

This was the blessing that came from Abraham to Isaac and now Isaac was to "will" it to his successor.

... The Lord had already said at the birth of these two sons that, "the elder shall serve the younger."

... Still, Jacob intends to give this blessing to Esau (because he was the favorite son).

Isaac loved Esau because he loved Esau's venison.

... In fact, savory meat is mentioned six times

... he is a man led by his appetite.

... but Rebekah (the wife) overheard the conversation, and she has some plans of her own.

(Gen 27:6-8)⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, ⁷ 'Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.' ⁸ 'Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you.

Caveat: Husband and wives we are never to be in competition with each other. We are to be partners not opponents.

From all apparent evidence Rebekah was a clear-minded, practical, down-to-earth woman ...

... but she is also strong-willed, resolute, and determined.

The Lord had told Rebekah that the “elder would serve the younger” and now she sees her husband working against that.

... did she go to Isaac and talk with him about what he was planning with Esau? NO!

... she goes behind Isaac’s back to deceive him and manipulate the situation.

(Gen 27:9-10)⁹ "Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. ¹⁰ "Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death."

So here we have a loveless competitive relationship between a disobedient man and a deceitful wife.

... this is a troubled family.

Is it any surprise that their children turned out the way they did?

Lesson: Satan will first divide us over differences so that ultimately, he can make us enemies of each other ...

You see what is true of biological families is also true of family systems and a church (community of faith) is a family.

Here is a quote from Thomas Brooks. [*Thomas Brooks: Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices. Device IV point number 3*]

“Satan has his devices to destroy the saints’ and one great device that he has to destroy the saints is, by working Christians to first find another strange then to divide, and then to make them bitter and jealous, and then they will bite and devour one another.”

... We must never forget that Satan is the accuser...

Isaac and Rebekah are divided and this division has made a negative impact of Jacob and Esau.

The story continues...

Jacob doesn't refuse to follow his mother's deceitful command, but he does see a flaw in her scheme.

(Gen 27:11-17) ¹¹ Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. ¹² "Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing." ¹³ But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me." ¹⁴ So 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 best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. ¹⁶ And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

Rebekah tells her son Jacob the plan to deceive Isaac and get the blessing.

... Jacob is afraid. “Mom, Dad will catch me and then he will only see me as a deceiver.”

As with all sin, the greatest fear wasn't committing the sin ... it was getting caught.

... and there seems to be no thought of Esau at all.

But Rebekah persisted ...

So, Jacob goes and gets his mother two goats, and she makes a stew.

... Jacob puts on some of Esau's clothes

... she puts the skins from the goats on Jacob's hands and neck

... and Jacob goes out to deceive his father.

In fact, in this next part where we learn that Jacob is quite the accomplished liar.

... we are going to hear Jacob tell five lies. (In verses 19-24)

If we despise what God offers, He will reject us.

We must do everything to make sure that neither sin, Satan, or suspicion divides us from each other.

3. The FRUIT of deceitfulness is SORROW (27:18-35)

(Gen 27:18-24)¹⁸ Then he came 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 as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, [wild meat or venison but it's not it is domesticated goat] that you may bless me." ²⁰ Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God caused it to happen to me." ²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." ²² So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. ²⁴ And he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he said, "I am." [Repeats the first lie.]

What a Liar!

It's almost heartbreaking to watch and listen to Jacob deceive and manipulate his elderly father.

... and even though Isaac may be a bit suspicious

... like every other parent he wants to believe that his children would never lie to him

... he wants to believe the best about his children.

(Gen 27:25-29) ²⁵ So he said, "Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you." And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. ²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come close and kiss me, my son." ²⁷ So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed; ²⁸ Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine; ²⁹ May peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you; Be master of your brothers, And may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you and blessed be those who bless you."

Jacob gets the blessing from his father and with a sigh of relief he then scurries away ...

- In spite of what the Lord said at the birth of these two boys **Isaac** still tries to give the blessing to Esau
- **Rebekah** has gone behind her husband's back and convinced Jacob to trick his father
- ... **Jacob** has dressed up in goat skin and lied to his father
- ... and **Esau**, the firstborn sold his birthright for a bowl of soup

I BET YOUR FAMILY'S NOT LOOKING SO BAD RIGHT NOW! (HA)

This is a troubled family and let's look at the fallout from all this deception.

But he soon finds out that he is mistaken.

(Gen 27:30-35) ³⁰ Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. ³¹ Then he also made savory food and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." ³² Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." ³³ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." ³⁴ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" ³⁵ And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing."

Esau is heartbroken.

... but Esau's weeping was not one of repentance.

... He wasn't sorry for the deal he had made with Jacob over the birthright

... He didn't want the obligation

What Esau is upset about is that he is not going to get 2/3 of his father's land and possessions.

... This is a sad moment, but Esau's tears are tears of regret/remorse ... NOT REPENTANCE

(Heb 12:16-17) ¹⁶ that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

What is God trying to teach us in this story? ...

Every one of us were born into a troubled family...

... certainly, families have different degrees of trouble ... but every one of them has trouble

... conflict ... disagreement ... deception ... sorrow

This is what sin has done ... even to the best of families (like the family of Abraham/Isaac/Jacob)

... there is trouble from time to time in every family

Don't be discouraged ...

The Good News is that God is calling all of us into a better family ... HIS FAMILY

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (1 Jn. 3:1-2)

If you live a life of deceitfulness, you will have a life that brings sorrow and heartbreak to you ... and everyone around you.

Nobody was the real winner in this story.

- Isaac was heartbroken because his favorite son didn't get the blessing and because his other son lied to him.
- Esau lost everything
- Jacob had to leave his home
- Rebekah was sorrowful. Because of this deceit Jacob had to run away from home and neither Isaac nor Rebekah would ever see Jacob again.

We must do everything to make sure that neither sin, Satan, or suspicion divides us from each other.

If we despise what God offers, we, like Esau will lose everything.