

“God’s Will, God’s Way”
Genesis 26:34-28:9
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He came to me already knowing what he **should** do.

The housing arrangement had to end.

He was a believer, she was not.

They had been living together for two years.

He knew what to do but he cried about his unwillingness to do it.

In the months since that time, the situation has become only more difficult.

The misery factor in his life is at an all-time high.

His relationship with the woman isn’t good and his guilt over his disobedience to God is worse yet.

Have you ever had the experience of being fairly certain of God’s will in a particular matter but you were unwilling to do it?

You hoped you could disregard God in that moment and do what you wanted and then hope that somehow it would all work out okay?

Did it work? Maybe for a while? Maybe, in fact, from all outward appearances it has worked for a lifetime. But what is the eternal outcome?

Sometimes, for us, it’s not a matter (1) of refusing God’s but it is (2) attempting to do God’s will in our own way.

Do we believe God has a plan for our lives?

But instead of waiting for God we push ahead in our own efforts.

How many, early in life, make a commitment to God to follow him and seek his best for their lives but then unable to wait, they take control of their own destinies (or so they think) and try to grab at life.

I have spoken to many who have told of early commitments to Christ, plans to live their lives for him, and then have described getting caught up in selling their souls to some job for the sake of the money or prestige it offered.

Not many years later they are lamenting the price they paid – the price of a marriage or two, children they don't know, and years that didn't count for anything.

Early in life they believed that God's plan for them was for their good but they couldn't let it come in God's way, they had to do it their way.

How many of us want God's blessing but we want it in our way, on our terms, in our timing, and we will resort to our methods to get it?

The story set before us today, in our on-going study of Genesis, is a sad commentary on a family.

Two family members trying to disregard the will of God and two of them trying to accomplish God's will in their own way.

The incident occurred in the lives of Isaac and Rebekah and their two sons, Esau and Jacob.

It's the kind of story that given a 21st Century setting could easily be the script for a Sunday night movie.

A man with great wealth, two sons vying for the inheritance, a stubborn old man determined to give it all to his favorite son and a scheming mother determined to make certain that her favorite son gets it.

Favoritism, scheming, an all or nothing plan to deceive, high tension as the plan is almost discovered in the act, anger, a plan to kill and an escape.

It's very dramatic but most of all it is sad – sad to watch a family disintegrate because they didn't obey or trust God.

There is a well-know verse in Proverbs that I think captures the lesson of this passage:

Proverbs 3:5-7

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.”

Watch that lesson unfold with me by looking at Genesis 27:1-29
(READ)

Let me give you just a quick outline of the text:

I. The story begins with us observing **two negative ways of responding to the will of God in our lives:**

Disregard it (like Isaac and Esau) or trying to force it (like Rebekah and Jacob).

II. We will go on to see **the results of such actions:**

It is misery for all accompanied by repentance (Isaac) or bitterness (Esau).

III. Lastly, we will look at concluding lessons.

The story is told in scenes.

In the first scene Isaac and his oldest son Esau are talking.

Isaac said to his son,

Genesis 27:2-4 "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death... Go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me...and bring it to me to eat so that I may give you my blessing before I die."

We have earlier in Genesis learned three things that make that statement significant.

1. We learned that the blessing Isaac was about to give his son Esau was virtually the granting of his wealth to Esau and the transference of God's promises to him.

God had said that through one son of Isaac, God would give them a land of their own, God would multiply them into a large nation of people and God would bless the rest of the world.

Isaac is preparing to give that blessing to Esau.

2. The second thing we learned earlier in Genesis is that the oldest son Esau had sold this blessing/birthright, his privileged place of being the oldest son, to his younger brother Jacob.

The birthright and the blessing spoken of here are the same issue. Esau was no longer entitled to it, and he knew it, in fact, he despised the birthright.

Genesis 25:32 "...What good is the birthright to me?.. So Esau swore an oath, selling his birthright to Jacob... So Esau despised his birthright."

3. The third thing we learned earlier, and most significant, was that God had already determined that Jacob would be the son to whom the birthright, the blessing, the inheritance and promises would be given.

God had clearly and forcefully said to Rebekah that Jacob would be the son who receives the blessing.

Genesis 25:23 "The Lord said to her, "...one people will be stronger than the other and the older will serve the younger."

Certainly Rebekah told Isaac this, especially since Jacob was her favorite.

Given that background, what do we see Isaac and Esau doing in the first part of this incident?

They are both disregarding the will of God.

Esau earlier wanted nothing to do with God's special blessing – considering it so worthless, that he sold his birthright/blessing for a bowl of soup.

But now he has apparently changed his mind and attempts to go back on his word by secretly getting the will signed by his father while Jacob is nowhere around.

Isaac, undoubtedly knowing the will of God given years earlier that Esau would serve Jacob, that Jacob was supposed to receive the birthright and blessing, nonetheless, disregards the clear will of God and tries to give the blessing to Esau anyway.

Here is Isaac, this promised son of Abraham; Isaac, the keeper of the great promises of God to be passed to the next generation, deliberately disregarding the clear will of God in order to satisfy his own desires.

Did he really think he could disobey God and everything would work out okay?

Do we really think we can flagrantly disregard God's will for our lives and it will somehow turn out okay?

How many have gotten married when they knew it was wrong?

How many have gotten divorced even when, in their situation, they knew it was wrong?

How many have taken jobs when they knew it would violate God's will for them or their families?

How many have turned away from the direction God was leading them in life because something else seemed more attractive?

Is there anything in your life right now that you know is God's will for you but you are even now in the process of turning another direction?

Clearly Esau and Isaac are disregarding the will of God and it remains to be seen in this story, what happens to them as a result.

But rejection of it is not the only possible negative reaction to God's will in our lives.

Rebekah and Jacob show us another response: They set out to do God's will but **in their own way**.

They are unwilling to wait for God to get it done God's way.

I cannot help but think that as Moses, the author of Genesis, retold this story, he thought of his own very similar response.

In Exodus 2:11-15, he tells us that he killed an Egyptian in his method for accomplishing God's purpose.

Luke records it this way in Acts 7:23-29 Moses did this in order to convince the Israelite people "that God was using him to rescue them".

Moses quickly learned that he understood God's plan but he totally misunderstood God's ways.

It would take 40 years for God to teach Moses a dependence on **both** God's plan AND God's ways.

In Rebekah's and Jacob's impatience and in their fear that God didn't have sufficient control of the situation they devised their own scheme to get God's will done.

Rebekah convinced, even cajoled, Jacob into beating his brother to his father's dinner table by getting a goat close by, that Rebekah would make into the same kind of dish that Esau was planning.

Furthermore Jacob would disguise himself as Esau and get the blessing that Isaac meant for Esau.

The scheme and deception are bad enough but Jacob even **compounds the sin by blaspheming the name of God**, claiming that God had helped him get the game quickly.

Can you imagine that scene?

Rebekah overheard Isaac and Esau talking so she quickly gets with Jacob to weave her plan.

There is tension here because Esau won't be hunting forever.

Can they get the goat, get it prepared, disguise Jacob, complete the meal and get the blessing before Esau returns?
Will Esau catch him in the act?

Furthermore, can Jacob really pull off this stunt?

Even though his father is blind, won't he know it isn't Esau?
It's especially tense when Isaac wants a kiss from his son, especially after his father had even questioned whether this was truly Esau.

As Jacob leans in to kiss his father, you can't help but wonder if the old man will realize the truth and curse Jacob, just as Jacob feared!

Here's Jacob and his mother, scheming, deceiving, openly lying and even blaspheming God.

Sir Walter Scott wrote, "O what a tangled web we weave; When first we practice to deceive."

All of that deceit for the sake of accomplishing what God had already promised would happen anyway.

Why? Because they didn't trust God would get it done!

How many of us don't trust God to get it done?

We know God's will for us is best but we are afraid he might not get it done when we need it.

Or how many of us, day in and day out, refuse to take the time to pray and wait upon the Lord even in the everyday things of life?

Instead we try to accomplish God's will in our ways.

Well what happens to these disobedient or untrusting family members?

Isaac's and Esau's plan to disobey God, fails.

When Isaac learns that Jacob had fooled him into giving Jacob the blessing, the text says, "Isaac trembled violently" realizing that the blessing couldn't be taken back. (Genesis 27:33)

When Esau learned what his brother had done, "he burst out with a loud and bitter cry..." (Genesis 27:34)

Isaac is forced to give his favorite son Esau an "anti-blessing".

The positive birthright/blessing already given away, Isaac can only give Esau a prediction of **a tough life of warfare and subservience to his brother**, with the only positive note being that he won't forever live under his brother's rule.

At first it appears that Rebekah's and Jacob's plan succeeds.

Jacob gets the blessing.

But it becomes quickly apparent that misery is **their** lot as well.

When Esau learns what Jacob has done, he plots to kill him.

Rebekah, who loves her son Jacob, must tell him to flee the country.

And as far as we can tell, though she hoped Jacob would be gone for only a few days, there is reason to believe **she never saw this favorite son again**. She probably spend the last years of her life mourning the loss of her son.

Her favoritism of Jacob, her scheming against Isaac and Esau certainly don't endear her to her son Esau and his wives.

And in Genesis 27:46 Rebekah tells Isaac that Esau's wives make life so miserable for her that life is hardly worth living.

Misery results from her favoritism, her scheming, her distrust of God.

Jacob, on his part, is a man running for his life.

And the Jacob who deceived is the Jacob who is deceived and spends 20 years before he can return home.

Jacob spends the latter years of his life mourning the loss of his youngest sons.

Tensions in his own family finally lead Jacob to say in Genesis 47:9 “My years have been few and difficult”

The misery went all around and it lasted for lifetimes.

There is a bright spot in this sad story.

When the NT comments on Isaac and Esau it gives two very different pictures.

Of Isaac, the father, it writes, “Hebrews 11:20 “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.”

This is a surprising and remarkable commentary on Genesis 27.

It seems that when Isaac finally came to his senses about which son was God’s choice, he repented and complied with God’s wishes. In chapter 28, Isaac fully blesses Jacob with the blessing pronounced by God on Abraham and Isaac – apparently realizing that this was God’s choice.

Isaac has a change of heart, but **Esau only goes deeper into his stubborn rebellion against God.**

Hebrews 12:16-17 “See that no one is... is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.”

Esau refuses repentance.

Both Isaac and Esau come up against the “anvil” of God’s will and pounded against it they both change.

But while Isaac bends to God's will, Esau, in tears of anger plots to kill his brother.

While Esau only regrets his loss, **Isaac yields to God's will.**

What lesson do we learn beyond the obvious that we have already stated?

The whole story certainly speaks to every generation that God will protect his plan – He is sovereign right down to the details of a family's life!

Furthermore it is apparent that God's plans can't even be thwarted by the sinful actions of people – even his own.

God is sovereign. His plan will be fulfilled.

God in his mercy and grace will accomplish his purposes.

And I again think the whole story only illustrates forcefully the great verses in Proverbs 3.

Listen to it thoughtfully and carefully in light of Genesis 27.

Proverbs 3:5-7

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.”

Do God's will and do it in God's way!