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Forgetting God (Lessons from Jacob) – Genesis 27:1-29

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These Bible study notes are made available to you each week during the session by email and, as we are able, by hard copies brought to your office. They can also be found on our website at www.capitolcom.org/maryland. My prayer is that they will challenge you with the revealed truth of God and that each of us will be impressed with the ways we can live out the principles found in the Bible. If you ever have thoughts or questions about these notes, please contact me with the information listed in the heading.

In our first study of this session, we looked at Jacob's manipulation of his twin brother, Esau, as he took advantage of his weaknesses and impulsive nature to obtain his birthright (the rights of the first-born son.) This week, we again see Jacob plotting against Esau to steal away the official blessing given by his father, Isaac. In this first part of the story (we will get to part two next week), the example is clear that if we allow ourselves to go far enough down the wrong path, we can forget God when dealing with others or when planning for the future.

FORGETTING GOD'S PAST BLESSINGS (27:1-4)

Genesis 27:1-4 - When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I am." He said, "Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die."

Isaac had lost most of his eyesight at this point in his life, even though he would actually live another 43 years! He is preparing to give the blessing to his first-born son, Esau, a great honor and spiritual responsibility. The problem is that God had made it clear, even before the twins were born, that the eventual leader of the family and head of the new nation of Israel was to be the second-born, Jacob. God had told this to Rebekah when she was expecting:

Genesis 25:23 - And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."

Why did Isaac plan to give the blessing to Esau? We know Esau was his favorite son from other passages, so was he angry that Esau wasn't the son God chose to father the nation he promised? Was he senile and simply forgot the prophecy? Was he just defiant and not mindful of God's promise to exalt Jacob to a higher status?

It may have been the latter, since Isaac seems resolute to give the blessing to his favorite son in deliberate disobedience. Isaac, who had seen God work in miraculous ways, seems to have forgotten past blessings from God. He was on Mount Moriah when his father, Abraham, was told to sacrifice him on an altar, but God stopped him and provided a ram instead. He had prayed with Rebekah for years for children before God answered with the birth of their twin boys. Even he had been born as a miracle baby to parents well past child-bearing age.

So how could Isaac forget about all of that? Unfortunately, it is a condition we all can fall into if we're not careful. We have seen God's goodness in many ways in the past and benefitted from his blessings, yet we so often forget that when we face a big decision or a difficult situation. It can also happen in the busyness of our daily lives when we fail to recall God's promises and faithfulness. The disobedience of Isaac is a caution to us all to fight to remember how God has worked in us and for us in the past.

Psalms 77:11, 12 - I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.

Many factors will work against us as we struggle to remember – the passage of time, the influence of the world, our own sinful nature, our pride that tells us we can live life ourselves. But these things give us all the more reason to be determined to reflect on God's past help and might.

FORGETTING GOD IN OUR COMMUNICATION (27:5-17)

Genesis 27:5-17 - Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, 'Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the LORD before I die.' Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies." But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing." His mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me." So he went and took them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the

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house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

If Isaac's actions are puzzling, Rebekah's are worse. The level of scheming and behind-the-back maneuvering that had become commonplace in this family over the years reached a new height here as Rebekah and Jacob work against Esau, exploiting Isaac's lack of eyesight to steal away the blessing. The elephant in the room of this family is the dearth of communication.

Earlier in Genesis, it is clear that Isaac preferred the older of the twins, Esau, and Rebekah's favorite was Jacob. It would follow, then, that the majority of the parents' time would be spent with the child they loved the most. This probably left a large gap in communication in their marriage. These verses say Rebekah was eavesdropping on Isaac, but we have to wonder how much direct, honest dialogue happened in their relationship.

Lack of communication is poison to any marriage and in this instance, it plainly worked a wedge between the husband and wife. When my wife, Tracy, and I have had our strongest disagreements (and thankfully there haven't been many), they have always manifested themselves in a breakdown of communication – but only for a time. When we sense our level of communication suffering, that's when we need to break the pattern as soon as possible by vowing to connect and do it as often as we can to avoid the silence.

Rebekah's silence with Isaac resulted in a plan to help Jacob disguise himself as his brother, Esau, so Isaac would unknowingly give him the blessing. God's best for our relationships is honest communication and when we forget that, problems follow.

FORGETTING GOD IN PRAYERLESSNESS (27:18-29)

Genesis 27:18-29 - So he went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success." Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him. He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I

am." Then he said, "Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son." So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed! May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

The execution of the plan of Rebekah and Jacob went off without a hitch. When we make our own plans in life, we may think that we have done well because of how smoothly it goes. But what we don't read in this passage is any indication that God was consulted at any point by any person involved.

In the past, we know that prayer was a key part of Isaac and Rebekah's life. When they were not conceiving early on in their marriage, they sought God and he answered.

Genesis 25:20, 21 - and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah . . . to be his wife. And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

In the very next verse, she prays as well. What happened over the years that they backed away from prayer? Whatever the reasons were, we should take notice and be warned that this is so easy for us to do as well. Our pride fools us into believing we can figure out the next move and before long, God is no longer trusted or a part of our thinking.

Isaac ultimately gave the blessing to Jacob, thinking that he was Esau, but the honor of the first-born would have come to Jacob anyway. God had already prophesied that before he was born. No scheme was needed. God had a way of bringing his plan about, but Rebekah and Jacob felt they had to help God out by coming up with their own way. Again, we should pay heed to this example and see that God has his purposes for us and we should trust him to do his work in his way in his time. When we forget him in our prayerlessness, we open ourselves up to all kinds of chaos that could be avoided.

Jacob and his family would go through years of unintended consequences because they forgot God. You and I need to be cautious that we don't follow that path.