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## DECEPTION – LESSONS FROM JACOB (Genesis 27:30-45)

In the late 1980s, Billy Joel released a song titled “We Didn’t Start the Fire”. In it, many well-known names and events from the 20<sup>th</sup> century were listed and the songwriter made the point that the problems in the world hadn’t been caused by his generation. In fact, the injustice, selfishness, war, crime, greed and oppression had been going on “since the world’s been turning”. We’ve seen already in our series in Jacob’s life that people have struggled with sin for thousands of years – from the very beginning. Last time, we focused on how easily we can forget God in the daily challenges of life<sup>1</sup>. In this study, we turn to an area many struggle with in the political arena – deception.

### DECEPTION BUILDS SELF-RELIANCE

*Genesis 27:18, 19 - 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.”***

Jacob and his family had been involved in deception for years. Jacob’s own name meant “deceiver”. As the years passed, it became clear that decades of sinful patterns had taken deep root in the lives of Jacob and Esau as well as their parents, Isaac and Rebekah. What once had been a family that sought to please God had spiraled into prideful schemes and manipulation.

One reason people can find themselves falling further into a deceptive way of dealing with others is, ironically, God’s patience. When we lie, we often are the only person who knows and there may be no immediate consequence to pay. God sees the lying, of course, but is extremely longsuffering with us, to give time to realize our fault and come to him to repent and receive forgiveness with the aim to become more honest. Because of God’s patience with us, we can easily perceive that everything is fine and no one has been hurt by our dishonesty.

The truth is that, even if no one knows we have lied, we hurt ourselves. The false sense of security we create only serves to drive a wedge between us and the Lord as we tend to rely on ourselves and our own wisdom to navigate each day.

*Proverbs 28:26 - **Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.***

### DECEPTION BRINGS SUFFERING

*Genesis 27:30-35 - As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting. He also prepared delicious 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.” His father Isaac said to him, “Who are you?” He answered, “I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.” Then **Isaac trembled very violently** and said, “Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.” As soon as **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!” But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing.”*

Even though there weren’t immediate consequences for Jacob following his lying, Isaac and Esau went through immense pain. The language used here is pure anguish as these men realize that the blessing for the firstborn son (an important honor in that culture) had been received by the second-oldest twin. Anytime there is sin, pain in some form always follows.

Our lies may actually make life easier for us for a time. But when those around us become aware, the aftermath and resulting anger and loss of trust can be catastrophic.

Sinners don't pursue disaster. We sinners pursue sin because we believe it will satisfy us. But consider the promises from these verses from Proverbs 13.

*Proverbs 13:13 - Whoever despises the word brings **destruction** on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.*

*Proverbs 13:15 - Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their **ruin**.*

*Proverbs 13:21 - **Disaster** pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.*

The warnings couldn't be clearer in these verses. But also notice the positive promises of reward, favor and good that come to those who practice reverence, good sense and righteousness. As we will soon see, Jacob and his family are about to reap what they have sown and experience the true promises from Proverbs.

## DECEPTION BREEDS SEPARATION

*Genesis 27:41-45 - Now Esau hated 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 approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." But the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son and said to him, "Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. **Arise, flee** to Laban my brother in Haran and stay with him a while, until your brother's fury turns away— **until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you from there.***

The fallout of Jacob's deception launches a series of decisions by family members that had several things in common. First, there still seems to be no thought of consulting God as to what they should do. Plans are made immediately by Esau, then his mother Rebekah, which are full of impulsive self-reliance. Also, the result of this sad chapter eventually leads to deep separation in the family, both relationally and geographically.

It doesn't occur to anyone in this narrative that they should call on God for wisdom or for him to work out the situation for his glory. God's glory is the furthest goal for this family as they resort to actions motivated by hate (Esau) and self-preservation (Rebekah and Jacob). Here's what James counsels us to do when making our plans.

*James 4:13-15 - Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. **Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."***

In other words, consult God. We don't know or have any control over the future, but he does. We should pray for wisdom for direction during those times of decision-making. You should be aware, as a leader in the state of Maryland, that you have people praying for you on a regular basis. That should bring you great comfort as well as a sense of responsibility and accountability before the Lord.<sup>2</sup> We all need to make prayer a daily act.

Esau's knee-jerk reaction is rage – murderous rage that creates relational separation. His hate for his twin brother could only be satisfied by removing him completely. We know from a previous study that Esau's character didn't allow for any thoughtful reflection or spiritual priorities<sup>3</sup>. He sought immediate gratification of his desires, whatever they might be.

Rebekah's plan was to send Jacob away until Esau's hate subsided. What she didn't know was that by sending Jacob out of harm's way, she would never see him again, because he wouldn't return to that area for over twenty years. She was willing to endure the pain of short-term separation, but had no idea of the permanent separation she was really creating. When deception is present, separation always follows – either in relationships or in physical wedges that keep us from those we should stay close to.

<sup>1</sup> See last week's study on "Forgetting God – Lessons from Jacob": <http://tinyurl.com/nrpr23b>

<sup>2</sup> Our ministry has a daily prayer reminder featuring MD's leaders at <http://www.pray1tim2.org/states/md>

<sup>3</sup> See the study from January 22, 2015 titled "Manipulation – Lessons from Jacob": <http://tinyurl.com/n2uj3av>

## BIBLE STUDY

LEGISLATORS AND STAFF (During Session)  
TUESDAYS, 8:00 a.m.  
ROOM 153, HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING