

# Two Peoples—Because of Election

Genesis 25:19-34 (Part 2)

Halifax: 31 January 2016, 10:30 AM

## **Introduction:**

Today in our Genesis sermon series, we are going to look at the same passage we considered last week, but from a different perspective.

- The passage we are considering is the account of the birth and childhood of Jacob and Esau which you will find in Genesis 25 verses 19-34.

Last week, we focused in particular on the prayers of Isaac and Rebekah for their household which, of course, was the family from which the Messiah was to come!

- We saw how knowing this, they prayed earnestly for a son when Rebekah was found barren.
  - By this, the LORD showed again that the bringing forth of the Messiah was a divine work that man could not bring about apart from His agency.
  - We saw the faithfulness of Isaac who continued in prayer for a son through whom the promise would come for twenty years until God answered and Rebekah conceived.
- Then we saw her faithfulness in calling upon the LORD when she found an extraordinary commotion in her womb...
  - She went to the LORD in her bewilderment, looking for wisdom and counsel, and He was pleased to answer her with a divine oracle...
    - an oracle that we will be giving much attention to today...
    - an oracle that explained that two nations were in her womb—two very different people—and that the older would serve the younger.
      - She was very faithful in seeking the Lord in this matter...
- However, after the boys were born, we saw that Isaac and Rebekah did not continue in prayer, but began to take matters into their own hands and operate according to their own wisdom...
  - Instead of rejoicing in the oracle and giving thanks that God was continuing the promise through Jacob,
    - They ended up making the very promised blessing a matter of contention in their home that divided their household and brought much grief to them and to their posterity.
    - I spoke earnestly to you about how we need to see our families in Christ, and that our goal should be to serve Him together...
      - We ought to pray for each other in our homes, and encourage each other in serving the LORD instead of getting annoyed with each other as those who are pursuing their own selfish agenda (even if it is spiritual) do.
      - If you have not listened to this sermon, I hope you will listen to it on the website.
        - I mentioned that that very week, there were five different relationships I had encountered in which such selfish quarrelling was going on.
        - We need to hear what the LORD says about such things.

But this week, we are going to look at this same text about Jacob and Esau from a different perspective.

- We are going to look at it from the standpoint of what it teaches us about how God chooses one and rejects another.
  - This is a harder doctrine for us to accept than some, but Jesus Himself said that it is essential to our understanding of the gospel.
  - While many will want to say that this interpretation is of man, we cannot accept that because it is the interpretation that God has given us in Romans 9.
    - That is why, even if we don't like it, we must accept it—and the truth is, once we understand it, it will bring us humility, faith, and joyful thanksgiving.

So let me read this passage (Genesis 25:19-34) to you and then we will get underway.

- Here is the word of God—beginning in Genesis 25:19.
- Please give the reading of the word your reverent attention:

**Genesis 25:19-34:** This *is* the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac. <sup>20</sup> Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. <sup>21</sup> Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. <sup>22</sup> But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If *all is* well, why *am I* like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. <sup>23</sup> And the LORD said to her: "Two nations *are* in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; *one* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger." <sup>24</sup> So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were* twins in her womb. <sup>25</sup> And the first came out red. *He was* like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. <sup>26</sup> Afterward his brother came out,

and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac *was* sixty years old when she bore them. <sup>27</sup> So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. <sup>28</sup> And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his* game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. <sup>29</sup> Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was* weary. <sup>30</sup> And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary." Therefore his name was called Edom. <sup>31</sup> But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." <sup>32</sup> And Esau said, "Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?" <sup>33</sup> Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup> And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

May the Lord bless to us the reading and now the exposition of His Word.

As I mentioned, we will be looking in particular at the oracle about Jacob and Esau's birth today and what it tells us about God choosing one and rejecting another.

- This is a very important subject, because it is a doctrine that we naturally want to reject, but when we do it distorts our understanding of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - Yet, at the same time, many who profess to believe it, also misuse it and make it a matter of pride and selfishness when it ought to have the opposite effect.
- So we really need to understand this matter.

Let me draw your attention to the oracle itself again...

- This is what the LORD revealed to Rebekah when she went to inquire of Him because the twins in her womb were smashing each other around—that is what the word *struggled* conveys...and here is the oracle:
  - **Genesis 25:23: And the LORD said to her: “Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.”**

What does this mean? What are we to learn from this divine pronouncement?

**I. First, we need to see that there are two very different kinds of people presented to us here.**

A. The extraordinary thing about this is that these two very different boys are twins.

1. Usually twins are very similar.
  - They have the same parents, very similar genes, the same upbringing, and they enter the world at the same time.
  - But in this case it is declared that they will be very different.
    - two nations, two peoples, separated, one stronger, and the older subservient to the younger.
2. We see the surprising differences that would be obvious to all who met them.
  - They are very different in appearance...Esau is red and hairy, but Jacob is soft like most babies.
  - They are very different in their temperaments—Esau is skillful hunter who loves the thrill of the chase; and Jacob is mild and prefers the shelter of the tent and the pastoral life of a shepherd.
  - Esau is a man of action and Jacob is man of contemplation.
  - Esau is straightforward and simple, and Jacob is subtle and a schemer.
  - Esau is given to passions, and Jacob looks at the bigger picture.
  - They end up going in different directions, Jacob continuing the pastoral life of a shepherd and Esau moving to the place that was later named after him—the rugged land of Edom.

TRANS> As significant as these differences are,

B. God’s word informs us that there is a much more significant difference between these lads.

- This difference was one that Isaac and Rebekah could not have fully known from hearing the oracle...
  - But they could have known what they needed to know at that time—
  - Let’s look at what they could have known, and then at what they could not have known (but what we now know).
- 1. First, what Isaac and Rebekah could have known from the oracle:
  - a. They could have known that Jacob was the one who was chosen by God to carry on the line of the promised seed of the woman that God had promised to mankind since the fall.

- God had given this promise to Adam and Eve—that there would be a people who would repent of the sin into which the serpent had led them...
  - a people who would turn against the serpent and return to the Lord.
  - God had said that He would be the one who put the enmity in their heart against Satan—He would change them and grant them repentance...
- And the LORD also told them at that there would be an individual seed of the woman who would come and enter into a bitter contest with Satan...
  - And that this individual seed would be wounded, but would triumph over Satan completely, crushing his head.
- And we have seen in Genesis how this promise began to be unfolded in history...
  - That just as God said, there was an elect people in whom He put enmity for Satan, a people who returned to the LORD to be His people.
    - We have seen how marvellously God preserved these people in the ancient world, in the flood, and even at Babel...
  - And lately in our study of Abraham, we have seen how God promised to him that this individual seed of the woman who is to come would come through Abraham—then through Isaac—
    - And now with this oracle, it is clear that He is to come through Jacob and not Esau.
    - The family’s actions show that they at least understood the raw facts of this.
- b. This oracle should have filled with great longing for the promised Messiah.
  - It should have enflamed their hearts with hope and caused them to rejoice that God was still working out His promise.
  - And as far as they knew at the time, the fact that Esau was to be a different nation did not necessarily mean that he was to be excluded from the salvation that was to come through Isaac.
    - God had told Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his seed, so simply being a different nation did not mean exclusion.
    - Both Esau and Jacob ought to have rejoiced in the promised seed and both ought to have looked for the blessing to come through Him—regardless of which of them was to bring Him forth.
- But now let us look at what *we* know that Isaac’s family could not have known from the limited revelation that they had at the time...
- 2. We know that the difference referred to in the oracle between Jacob and Esau was not only that Jacob would bring forth the promised seed,
  - but also that Jacob would be of the seed of the woman and that Esau would be of the seed of the serpent!
    - It was a difference not merely of privilege, but of eternal destiny!
- a. The nation of Esau would be the kingdom of Satan and the nation of Jacob would be the kingdom of Jesus Christ...

- The people of Esau would be the people of this world, and the people of Jacob would be the people of God.
  - The struggle between them would be the struggle between the one who ignores God and one who seeks the will of God.
  - The dominance of Jacob would be the crushing of the serpent's head through the reign of Christ...
    - it would be the final casting of Satan's kingdom into the Lake of Fire and the raising of Christ's kingdom to glory, conquering death and Hell and sin in both its guilt and its power.
- b. This colossal difference between Jacob and Esau becomes clear as history unfolds.
- 1) We quickly see that Esau is a profane man—not profane in the sense that we often use the word today,
    - but profane in the sense of having no interest in the things of God...
      - profane, as we see in our text, in having no regard for the blessing of eternal salvation.
    - As we see in our text and as we examined last week, he sells his birthright for a mere bowl of red stuff—lentils we are told...
      - He was not truly starving, just craving the red stuff and because the birthright meant nothing to him, he had no problem parting with it in exchange for a bowl of lentils.
    - The most offensive thing about him is the way he says, “I am going to die anyway, so what is this birthright to me?”
      - He could not see the benefit of some promise that was going to be fulfilled in the far distant future of their family.
        - If he could not taste it now, what good was it to him?
        - This empty wretched soul had better things to do with his time and interests—like eating that good looking red stuff that his brother had made.
      - There is really not much better thing to do if your hope is only in this life—if you are profane like Esau...
  - 2) And then as history continues, we see in Esau a personal contentment with the things of the world...
    - When he meets Jacob, he truly does not care that Jacob has the birthright because he has acquired great wealth in this world.
      - When he had thought that he would lose out on the inheritance of his father in this world, he was hostile, but now he realises that the inherited blessing was this spiritual blessing that he has no interest in.
    - Jacob, on the other hand, dies as an old man in Egypt, expressly waiting for God's promised salvation—the eternal city of God!
  - 3) And then as history goes on, we see two very different nations...
    - With Esau's people, the Edomites, persecuting Jacob's seed and despising them because of their righteousness.
    - King Herod who tries to kill Jesus at His birth is an Idumean.

- c. But what illuminates the difference most of all is the word of God...
- 1) In Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, we hear the LORD Himself declare, in Malachi 1:2-3, **Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated.**
    - This is the most significance difference of all—one is loved by God and the other is hated by Him!
  - 2) And then in Romans 9, the passage we read earlier,
    - the Apostle Paul interprets this for us as God having chosen Jacob for salvation and having rejected Esau.
      - He says that Esau was appointed to be a vessel of wrath—a vessel in which God’s holy justice and wrath against sin will be forever displayed...
      - And Jacob was appointed to be a vessel of mercy—a vessel in which God’s mercy and grace are seen in His full and free salvation.
    - Their destinies could not be more opposite...
      - One forever shows how angry God is against sin...
      - The other how merciful God is in saving sinners through His Son.
  - 3) In Romans, Paul anticipates the objections that people always raise about this...
    - He answers them in very short order...
      - a) Of the objection of it being unfair, he says: Rom 9:14-15: **What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! <sup>15</sup> For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”**
      - b) And he anticipates and answers the objection of saying that Esau and the reprobate are helpless with these words...
        - **Rom 9:19-24: You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” <sup>20</sup> But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? <sup>22</sup> What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup> even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?**
        - If God, for the purpose of displaying His glorious attributes chooses to give some people like Esau what they truly deserve,
          - what we all deserve for rejecting God as our God, what is there to complain about?
          - He was under no obligation to show mercy to anyone.
            - If He shows mercy to some, does that make it wrong for Him to give others what they fully deserve?

- Of course not!
  - The real problem is that we flatter ourselves and think that we do not deserve what justice calls for!
  - We think we all deserve something better than that!
- We who rejected God as God think that!
  - If we could only see what wickedness it is to reject God—we would have an entirely different attitude about it.
  - And let me tell you—we will see it—we will see our wickedness for all that it is on the day of judgement.
  - We will see it and every mouth will be shut.

TRANS> So you see the mammoth difference between Jacob and Esau, it is the difference between righteous Christ and His seed; and rebellious Satan and his seed.

- But now I want you to focus your attention on what God is deliberately revealing to us by declaring the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau before they are even born.

## II. God is revealing to us that the reason one person is saved and another is not is because God freely choose to save one and not the other...that is it.

A. We know that God is revealing this to us with Jacob and Esau because the Apostle Paul tells us so in Romans 9.

- Let's take a look at Romans 9, shall we?
  1. At the beginning of the chapter, the dear apostle is expressing how much he longs to see the people of Israel saved...
    - He explains in verse 4 that they have: **the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;** and in verse 5, he declares that it was through their nation that Jesus came!
    - Nevertheless, many of them are not saved—as a whole, they have rejected the Messiah God sent through them!
      - Paul solemnly testifies that this causes **great sorrow and continual grief in his heart...**
        - It is indeed heart-wrenching to see those who have the privileges reject them in blindness and hardness.
  2. And Paul explains that is not as though God's word—His word of promise to His people—has failed...
    - Because from the beginning the LORD never said all of the physical descendants of Abraham would be saved...
      - just that in Isaac the seed—the seed of the woman—your seed—will be called...they will be called out of the rebellion to serve God.
    - So that means that not all of the physical descendants of Abraham had the promise of salvation— as Paul says in verse 8:
      - Verse 8: **That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.**

3. And the apostle then shows how God revealed this from the start through various people that He either chose or rejected that were Abraham's descendants...
  - a. First, with Isaac and Ishmael—both were Abraham's seed, but only Isaac was a true son of the promise—Isaac was chosen and Ishmael was not.
    - But we might expect this because Ishmael was born of the bondwoman that Abraham wrongly took when Sarah was barren to try to help God along...
    - God had no interest in Abraham's works to produce the heir of salvation...
    - God had promised the son, and it was to be His supernatural work of grace—and so it was that Isaac was miraculously born not only to a barren woman, but to a woman who was menopausal!
  - But God wanted to make a clearer statement that His salvation is not based on what He finds in us or our birth, but purely of His free mercy...
  - b. And so we have these twins that are conceived by Isaac's wife Rebekah, again a barren woman...
    - They are of the same woman, born at the same time.
    - There is no difference in them as there was in Isaac and Ishmael...
    - And before they have done anything, God declares that He has chosen one for salvation and one for condemnation...
      - He has loved Jacob and hated Esau...not at all based on their deeds, but simply based on showing mercy to one and not to the other.
    - Look at verse 10 and you can see how election is the emphasis in this whole matter...
      - **Rom 9:10-13: And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac <sup>11</sup> (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), <sup>12</sup> it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." <sup>13</sup> As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."**
  - c. And right away, people start saying "no fair! no fair!" and "how can you blame Esau?"
    - Yeah yeah yeah...how can you blame Esau for being a wretched God-rejecting man like everyone else?
      - Do you see how ridiculous it is to say such thing?
      - You can blame him just because he is a wretched God rejecting man—that is something to be blamed for—of course it is!
      - Jacob could be blamed for the same thing and so can all of you.
- Do you see the take away point here? Do you see what you are supposed to get out of all this?
  - Not ignorant objections about God being unfair...
    - That is not the point at all!



- B. The point is that salvation is entirely gratuitous!
- The point is that salvation has absolutely nothing to do with anything good that God finds in you!
  - The point is that salvation is entirely undeserved.
1. Here is the reason we have such a hard time with election...
    - Because we hang on to the notion (we really want to hang on to it) that there is something in us that is at least in some way deserving of salvation.
      - We cannot bear to face that there is absolutely nothing...nothing!
  2. It is all of grace. It is of pure mercy!
    - a. With God declaring His rejection of one and acceptance of the other before they are born, before they have done good or evil,
      - It shows us that neither Jacob nor any other individual that has ever received God's mercy is any more deserving of it than Esau was.
      - We are all the same wretched sinners—sinners who have rejected God...
        - We eat the forbidden fruit, then, like the adulterous woman of which Proverbs 30:20 says, **She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, "I have done no wickedness."**
      - That is our attitude that causes us to think we deserve God's salvation and that it is unfair of Him to save one and not another!
        - We eat rebellion and then we wipe our mouth and say, "I have done no wickedness."
    - b. God is telling us that there is no virtue in us of any kind that causes Him to save us!
      - Verse 15 and 16 nail it down: **Rom 9:15-16: For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."** <sup>16</sup> **So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.**
      - It is not about you and what you do—it is about pure mercy.
        - If you got what you deserve, you would be left in your rebellion and sin, like Esau was.
        - You would live your life, not necessarily hating God as far as you are concerned...
          - but rejecting Him as God—which is hatred of the worst sort!

TRANS> So you see then that God choosing of one twins and rejecting the other before they were even born proves that salvation is freely given as God pleases.

- That is what God is revealing through choosing Jacob and rejecting Esau.

### III. When election is understood, what effect will it have on you?

A. Well, it will humble your socks off!

1. Too often, those who embrace election (but don't understand it) have this weird pride...
  - A pride like Paul had when he was a Pharisee—before he met Jesus...
    - A pride that says, "I was chosen and you weren't," as if that were something to boast about!

- The only way that you can have pride like that is when you think that you were chosen because of some good in you—
    - some good that you did,
    - some good that God foresaw,
    - some good inside of you,
    - some good in your family—something...
  - When you think that way, you make election a cause for boasting—in yourself—when it ought to be a cause for deep humility...
    - because God, having revealed His salvation to you, has opened your eyes to see how truly you need the radical salvation that can only be provided from God the Son crucified.
2. When there is pride—you are like a person who was being an idiot and fallen into the raging waters at Niagara falls—
- and then some brave soul dives in and rescues you when you were completely helpless and loses his own life in doing so...
    - And then you go around boasting that it was because you were so great and so important that this man saved you!
    - You boasting is completely out of place!
  - You ought rather to boast in that man who rescued you—in his kindness and mercy to you.
    - It is true that when unbelievers hear us speaking about election with true thanksgiving to God, they will often read it as pride...
      - We have to be careful about that...
      - But even more, we have to be careful about the fact that pride really is in us about our election when it ought to humble our socks off.
      - If we really understand election, it will because it tells us that there is nothing in us that brought about our salvation.
- B. Secondly, when election is understood, it will draw forth childlike faith in us.
1. Election teaches you that you must put yourself entirely into God's hands for mercy—because salvation is all of mercy.
- In baptism, we put our children and ourselves into God's hands for Him to do the cleansing of our guilt and of our corrupt hearts...
    - You cannot do the saving—you must leave that to Him.
    - You cannot save yourself.
    - You are not in a competition with other sinners to prove to God that He ought to accept you.
      - Your only hope is to come to Him for mercy!
2. This is a lesson that takes time to learn.
- a. Jacob did not get this at all at first...he was competing for God's blessing.
- He knew from the oracle that God had chosen him over his brother—and instead of placing himself in God's hands to fulfill the promise,
    - Jacob began competing with his brother...

- He and his mother, in ridiculous ways that we will soon see, tried to outmaneuver Esau to be sure that Jacob got the rights of the firstborn that he had been promised by God.
  - He just did not get it—for a long time—and it brought many sorrows to him.
- b. But Jacob’s whole life, as we shall see, is a display of how God’s grace saves him despite all his efforts to save himself...
  - It shows how the LORD teaches Jacob that salvation comes from Him.
    - It takes him his whole life to understand this—but God sticks with him as he keeps on acting like an idiot and finally he starts to get it.
  - His life is a picture of the life of all of the elect...
    - God begins the work of effectual calling by which He finally brings us to look to Jesus for our salvation...
      - And then He keeps on working in us to purge us from all of our self-reliance and our pride...
      - It takes a lifetime for us to learn that salvation is not of us, but entirely of His mercy...
        - And even after a lifetime, our eyes are only half opened until the day of judgement when things become clear.
    - It is an odd thing—we have to learn to be like little children.
      - By God’s grace, we will learn.

TRANS> So humility and child-like dependence are two of the fruits of understanding election...

- and there is one more I want to mention...

C. When you understand election, it will make you extremely grateful to God for your salvation.

1. Your soul will be flooded with the joy of the Holy Spirit!
  - You will see that God saved you at such a great cost to Himself when you truly, truly, did not deserve it...
  - And you will grasp something of the curse from which you have been delivered—all through no merit of your own—
    - Even as others who are no different from you are swept into the abyss...
    - You will say, “But for the grace of God, I would go there too!”
2. And out of this gratitude, you will yearn to please God!
  - As long as you feel like your salvation was based partly on some merit or some goodness in you,
    - you will not be so free and so full in your service.
    - In fact, your reluctance to serve shows how little you really understand free election right now.
    - If you understood it, you would be a much more merciful person—you would want to show mercy as you have received mercy for God’s glory.
      - What you really think of God’s mercy is seen in how you treat others.

3. And this gratitude that I am talking about will also cause you to forever desire to give glory to God!
  - Like our Psalm of Focus—Psalm 115—you will say, **Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to your name give glory because of your mercy and your truth!**
    - You will want everyone to know about God's great mercy to His people!
    - You will speak to them about it and call them to come and worship God with you—
      - to come to Him to partake of this great thing called mercy—this free forgiveness and salvation!
  - And if they do not come, you will have great sorrow and continual grief in your heart the way Paul did on account of their rejection...
    - But how you will delight to gather with your brothers and sisters—and yes—with Christ Himself—to praise God for His mercy!
      - To hear the gospel preached!
      - To sing praises to God's name!
      - To commune at the table of thanksgiving which is also called the Lord's Supper.

**Conclusion:** What humility, what childlike faith, what gratitude will fill your soul when you truly understand God's electing grace.

- But be patient!
  - It takes a life time.
  - But let's pray that God will use even this sermon to move you on your way.
    - Salvation, you know, is His work.
    - You did not chose Him, but He chose you.