

Marriage: Uniting with a Curse? or with a Blessing?

Genesis 26:34 – 28:9

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Introduction to the entire section

Today in our Genesis sermon series, we have come to the passage that begins in Genesis 26:34 and runs all the way to chapter 28:9.

- In this passage we continue to trace the family with which God had established His covenant, and through which He has promised to bring the Messiah.
 - But sadly, we see them in the condition that God's people so often are in—living far too much by their senses rather than by God's word.
 - It is not that they entirely ignore God's word though—they live with reference to His promises for the most part...
 - but they try to handle spiritual responsibilities by the light of nature and often follow their own desires rather than God's word.
 - We have Isaac here who is full of sensuality—living for the flesh—and we have Esau following his bad example to the point of complete apostasy...he is completely lost...
 - And you have Isaac's wife Rebekah, struggling under Isaac's poor leadership, leading Jacob, their other son, into deception and manipulation as the method of obtaining God's promised blessing.
 - The family is really quite a mess...
 - Fortunately, there is another person involved here—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is their only hope...
 - And in His grace, He sovereignly works to bring blessing to His people.
 - Over the next few weeks as we consider this passage, we will see that it is His mercy that is the ultimate ground of salvation!
 - There would be no church to serve Him if it were left up to us.

Please give me your careful attention now as I read this entire portion to you.

- It begins in Genesis 26:34, and I will read through to Genesis 28:9.
- Here is the word of God.

Genesis 26:34 – 28:9: When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. ³⁵ And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. ^{27:1} Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.” And he answered him, “Here I am.” ² Then he said, “Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my

death. ³ Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. ⁴ And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring *it* to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.” ⁵ Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring *it*. ⁶ So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, “Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, ⁷

‘Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.’⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you.⁹ Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves.¹⁰ Then you shall take *it* to your father, that he may eat *it*, and that he may bless you before his death.”¹¹ And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Look, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth-skinned man.¹² Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.”¹³ But his mother said to him, “*Let* your curse *be* on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me.”¹⁴ And 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 choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.¹⁶ And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.¹⁷ Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.¹⁸ So he went 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 just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.”²⁰ But Isaac said to his son, “How *is it* that you have found *it* so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God brought *it* to me.”²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you *are* really my son Esau or not.”²² So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, “The voice *is* Jacob’s voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.”²³ And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him.²⁴ Then he said, “*Are* you really my son Esau?” He said, “I *am*.”²⁵ He said, “Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son’s game,

so that my soul may bless you.” So he brought *it* near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come near now and kiss me, my son.”²⁷ And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: “Surely, the smell of my son *is* like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed.²⁸ Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine.²⁹ Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed *be* everyone who curses you, and blessed *be* those who bless you!”³⁰ Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.³¹ He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, “Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that your soul may bless me.”³² And his father Isaac said to him, “Who *are* you?” So he said, “I *am* your son, your firstborn, Esau.”³³ Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, “Who? Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed.”³⁴ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me—me also, O my father!”³⁵ But he said, “Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.”³⁶ And Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”³⁷ Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, “Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?”³⁸ And Esau said to his father, “Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me—me also, O my father!” And

Esau lifted up his voice and wept. ³⁹ Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: “Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. ⁴⁰ By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck.” ⁴¹ So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” ⁴² And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, “Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. ⁴⁴ And stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury turns away, ⁴⁵ 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. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?” ⁴⁶ And Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?” ^{28:1} Then

Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. ² Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. ³ May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; ⁴ and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.” ⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. ⁶ Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,” ⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. ⁸ Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. ⁹ So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

May the LORD bless to us the reading and now the preaching of His Word.

Did you notice that this entire passage is framed by the subject of marriage?

- At the beginning there is the passage that tell us about Esau’s improper marriage to two Hittite women, who were among those God nations that God had cursed,
 - And at the end of the reading, you have the plans laid for Jacob to marry women who were not among the people of Canaan that God had cursed.
- The whole story about Jacob and Esau contending for the blessing is framed by this account about the kind of woman they each marry.
 - The Jewish lectionary has this all as one passage—just what we read, and many commentators also recognise that this is one literary unit.
- In any case, the Holy Spirit has surrounded the account of Jacob and Esau’s pursuit of the blessing with this talk about the kind of women they marry.
 - In this way, He makes it clear that this is an important subject.
 - It is no wonder that He does because marriage is a matter of tremendous importance for God’s covenant people.
 - One son unites in marriage to God’s curse, the other to God’s blessing.

- And it just so happens that in God’s providence, we have a lot of extra people among us today who will probably be getting married in the next fifteen years or so.
 - These marriages will have a huge impact on the strength of our Presbytery in Eastern Canada.
 - This is a matter of great concern for all of us in the church.
 - We should all be doing our part to encourage those who marry among us to marry only in the Lord.
 - So don’t tune out even if you are not one who is looking to get married yourself.
 - And let me add that there is also much here for those who already are married.
 - The heart of the matter goes beyond marriage—it has to do with what you join yourself to every day...
 - Do you join yourself to that which brings blessing and fruitfulness in God’s kingdom; or that which brings cursing and death?

TRANS> So examine yourself as we receive this first sermon on this passage.

- We will fully explore this entire passage over the weeks to come, but today our focus will be on the importance of what we join ourselves to, the subject that opens and closes this text.
- And so I want you to see in the first place that...

I. By marriage you display your character and where your hope lies.

- You show what is important to you—what you really value.
 - You show what you really want in life.

A. You can see that by his marriage, Esau shows that he is a profane man.

1. We know that he is a profane man because the Bible tells us this directly.
 - a. We saw this when we looked at the end of chapter 25 where Esau sold his birthright for some red stew—it is just called the red...red stuff.
 - He was so interested in eating the red stuff that he didn’t care about some birthright about some future blessing that wouldn’t even come in this life.
 - Abraham had been told that the family would not inherit the land for over 400 years and Esau knew that he would be dead by then.
 - So he says, **“Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?”**
 - You cannot tell if he means that he is about to die of hunger after his hunting trip, or if he means “I am going to die anyway, so what good is some birthright about some future inheritance after I am gone?”
 - b. In any case, Moses adds the comment that in saying this and taking the stew in exchange for his birthright, Esau despised his birthright.
 - And the book of Hebrews tells us that it was at this point that we are shown that Esau was a profane man...
 - A profane man is a man who looks at the eternal blessing of God as if it is nothing very special...
 - He looks at holy things as if they were common, at the sacred things of God as if they are ordinary things.

- And Hebrews explains that it was at this point when he ate the stew that Esau set the direction of his life...
 - It was a decision that would be beyond recall for him—he would not be able to go back.
 - He had set his course, and his course was that the things of God were not important to him...
 - Only the things that he could see and touch and enjoy right now.
 - He had no interest in some future blessing from God.
 - He did not care about eternity—he cared about right now.
2. And so it is that when we read the last two verse of Genesis 26, it should not surprise us at all to see that Esau married pagan women.
- It says: Gen 26:34-35: **When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. 35 And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.**
- a. As a profane man, it did not matter to Esau that these Hittite women were among those that God had cursed.
- It did not matter that God had appointed their people to destruction in 400 years because of their ungodliness.
 - It seemed completely irrelevant to him that as a son of God’s covenant blessing, he was joining himself and his household to people that were cursed...
 - because he did not care about God’s coming blessing...
 - Oh yes, we will see that he wants his father’s inheritance in this world, but he was profane and did not care that his family was appointed to bring salvation to the earth in the days to come.
- b. You can be sure that these Hittite women were sensual and alluring!
- They had that look, you know, and that walk—that carriage, that got all the guys’ attention...that immodest enticing look.
 - And to Esau, that was way more important than some future blessing from God that was promised to his family.
 - These women were something he could enjoy right now—like the red stew!
 - Esau was a pretty desirable guy too...
 - His parents had a funny religion, but he lived like a prince—going out hunting—he had lots of leisure time and lots of money...
 - And he was confident and secure—so it was no problem for him to pick up two of these Hittite woman—two of the sexiest ones.
 - And oh yes...it didn’t matter that he was joining himself to the people that God had cursed and devoted to destruction.
 - It was irrelevant because that was not supposed to happen any time soon!

TRANS> His decision here is just a reflection of who he is—of course—

- The kind of person you marry is also a reflection of that.
 - And then there is Jacob...
- B. Jacob shows by the kind of woman he decides to seek that he is a man who *is* interested in God's future blessing.
1. Now I must admit here that Jacob did not yet really understand the blessing.
 - a. We might be able to compare him with Jesus' disciples before Jesus was crucified and raised again...
 - They knew that He was the Son of God and they knew that He was going to bring God's kingdom,
 - but they really did not understand what that kingdom was about.
 - They kept quarrelling with each other about which of them would be the greatest, and Jesus kept telling them that the greatest in His kingdom was the one that laid down his life for others...
 - He kept telling them that that was what He was going to do...
 - And they just kept giving Him blank stares...
 - b. Well, Jacob, at this time, was thinking like the disciples that God's blessing was something he needed to strive after by out manoeuvring his brother Esau.
 - But to his credit, like Jesus disciples, he kept his heart set on the blessing even when things went quite differently than he expected...
 - And eventually he learned a whole lot more about the real beauty of Christ's kingdom!
 - That it is a kingdom where the one who is greatest is the one who does the greatest service—who pours himself out for all the others.
 - This had already been revealed to Jacob's father Isaac when God told Isaac's father to offer him on Mount Moriah as a burnt offering...
 - He stopped Abraham from doing it at the last minute because Isaac was not the one to be the sacrifice, but God told them that He would provide the true sacrifice—which of course was Jesus Christ.
 - In this way, He showed that the coming one who was promised to bring blessing to all the nations would give His life a ransom for them.
 - Jacob is going to grow in his understanding of this, just as all believers do...but right now, he is thinking of greatness in the kingdom in the way that people usually think of it.
 - We will get to see this progress (this growth in grace) as we follow his life in the weeks to come.

TRANS> So if we are to evaluate where Jacob is in his walk at this time—

- We might say that like Jesus disciples before the resurrection...
 - He realises that any blessing that is worthwhile will come from God...
 - And knowing that God has promised to bless his family, he is committed to seeking God's blessing—he knows that there is nowhere else to go.

2. And Jacob's decision about who he will marry reflects the fact that he wants to marry someone that will not put that blessing at risk.
 - a. Surely he knows how careful his grandfather Abraham had been about his father Isaac's marriage.
 - Jacob must have heard the story about how Abraham would not allow Isaac to marry the women around them who were cursed, but had sent his servant to Padan Aram to find a wife for Isaac from among his people.
 - As someone who was promised God's blessing, he did not want to mix up his family with those on whom God had pronounced His curse.
 - What would you get from a mixture like that?
 - b. And so we see in chapter 28 that Jacob agrees to go to Padan Aram to look for a wife...
 - Genesis 28:5 tells how Jacob obeyed his parents and went.
 - It is true enough that there are mixed reasons for going—a lot of it was his mother's way of rescuing him from Esau who was waiting to kill him when his father Isaac died...
 - But it was also true that Jacob wanted to take a wife who was not among the accursed people of Canaan.
 - For all those years he had not taken any of the local women, but had waited.
 - c. Even Esau clues in to this, as summarised by verses 6-9...
 - **Gen 28:6-9: Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,"⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram.⁸ Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac.⁹ So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.**
 - This, of course, is a bad case of Esau missing the point...
 - So you have Jacob looking for a wife that will maintain the blessing of God in his household...
 - And you have Esau who doesn't care about the blessing of God—not the future blessing that will come after he is dead...

TRANS> And now I must put the question to each of you...

C. What are you seeking? To what do you join yourself to?

1. Are you among those who are seeking to marry in the future?
 - To what kind of person do you wish to join yourself?
 - To one who is cut off from God and so under His eternal curse?
 - or to one who is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and so under His blessing?
 - What do you want for your family, God's blessing or God's curse?
 - Does it matter to you?

2. This is not just about marriage—this is about who you are.
 - Perhaps you are already married... Well let me ask you...
 - To what do you join yourself to day by day?
 - All of you—married or not married.
 - Do you join yourself to the things that God has cursed? To your covetous desires? to gluttony? to pornography? to just general neutrality and wasting time?
 - Are you profane? Does the kingdom of God not mean much to you?
 - Or are you busy joining yourself to things like prayer, applying God's word, worshipping Him, healthy relationships, spreading His kingdom, serving others, preparing yourself to be able to care for your home?

II. There is a very different result for the profane person and the godly person.

A. Consider the big picture for Jacob and Esau!

1. Jacob joins himself to God's blessing and in time that blessing comes.
 - The LORD Jesus Christ comes, and He makes atonement for Jacob's sin.
 - He is that lamb that God promised to provide in place of Isaac on Mount Moriah—the one that would not come for over a thousand years!
 - So where is Jacob today? Where did he end up?
 - Even as I speak, Jacob is rejoicing in the presence of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God who died for him.
 - Jacob is waiting for the resurrection when he will receive the full inheritance that God promised to his family.
 - Even though he did not understand it fully, that is the blessing that belongs to him and that he earnestly sought.
 - Jacob will live in that kingdom of righteousness as a perfect man forever because of Jesus Christ his saviour.

➤ He was so right in believing that the only source of true blessing was God.

2. But where is Esau today?

- He is not with Jesus Christ in glory!
- He is with another man that had his portion in this life...
 - He is with that one called Dives that Jesus tells us about in Luke 16:23:
 - **Luke 16:23-25: And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented."**
- The future that seemed so unimportant to Esau, now seems very important.

B. All through Biblical history and church history we see the importance of this matter of what God's covenant people join themselves to!

1. Solomon exemplifies the recurring problem in the Old Testament of marriage to pagan women.
 - He was the man of wisdom, but he foolishly joined himself to pagan wives.
 - In God's mercy, it appears that he repented, but he brought forth a household that was full of cursing...
 - He brought trouble to all Israel so that the kingdom of God became mixed with profane people who were accursed.
 - How could it be any other way when he married them?
- And he is not the only one who did this—it was done both before and after him.
2. It has been done in the church under the New Covenant too.
 - You would think that we would know better by now...
 - But again and again, the church has blurred the distinction between those that are blessed and those that are cursed.
 - We have allowed members to marry those who are accursed, and we have allowed those who are accursed to continue at the communion table.
 - Again and again, we have ignored the warning we read in 2 Cor 6 this morning... where God says:
 - **2 Cor 6:14-16: Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."**
 - Do you see how He promises that He will be our God and that we will be His people *if* we refuse to join ourselves to those that He has cursed?
 - Why should you forfeit God's blessing for Hittite women?
 - Or for whatever else you want to join yourself to?
3. It brings great sorrow to me as a pastor when I see young people—or older people—who are in God's covenant people,
 - counting the blessing of God as a common thing...
 - And turning their hearts to some stupid thing like red stew, or Hittite women, or whatever...
 - You are the blessed people of the LORD...
 - You have no business joining yourself to that which God curses!
 - Blessing comes from God!
 - And if join yourself to what God has cursed, there will be consequences.
 - You cannot presume about what the outcome will be for you.
 - You may repent, as Solomon did, or you may end up like Esau who found no place of repentance.
 - But in any case, joining yourself what is accursed brings great damage to both you and to the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

III. This is a matter that ought to greatly concern us all!

A. Parents, you have a huge responsibility in this matter!

1. Fathers, you are to lead the way...you are to care enough about God's kingdom (and your children) to take pains that your children do not marry unbelievers.
 - a. Listen to how God instructs us as his people in Deuteronomy 7:2-4:
 - **Deut 7:2-4: You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. ³ Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. ⁴ For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.**
 - b. From this you can see that it is not only the responsibility of individuals not to join themselves to what God has cursed,
 - It is also the responsibility of fathers not to give their daughters in marriage to unbelievers or allow their sons to take unbelievers as wives.
2. Where was Isaac in this matter? Are you like Isaac?
 - a. He had set a good example himself in this—
 - He had submitted to his father and had married a woman that was not under God's curse—and he had loved her, at least at first.
 - b. But now with his sons Jacob and Esau he seems to be completely passive.
 - Esau was forty when he took his Hittite wives, and all we are told of Isaac is that he and his wife were deeply grieved by these women.
 - Why didn't he restrain his son, even to the point of threatening to cut him off from his inheritance if he were to marry a pagan woman?
 - We commended Isaac's patience and gentleness last week in the way he dealt with the Philistines about the wells,
 - He left the matter in God's hands...
 - But now that same gentle, passive nature becomes a terrible fault!
 - Now putting the matter in God's hands means taking his God-given responsibility to rebuke his son!
 - He is mild and gentle when he ought to have been assertive!
 - c. It is true that children who have been brought up as Esau was (to always get their own way) may not listen when you talk to them about marriage,
 - That's why you should discipline them from their earliest days...
 - But in chapter 28 it appears that Esau did not even know that his parents were displeased with his marriages until he heard about how they had instructed Jacob not to marry such women.
 - You get the impression that if Isaac had instructed him about this, he would have listened to him!
 - d. Sadly, with Isaac, the only reason he takes action with Jacob is because Rebekah takes initiative...
 - She is the one who brings up the matter and insists that her husband act.
 - Isaac should have addressed this years before!

3. Brothers and sisters, it is a travesty that there are so many Christian fathers that are just like Isaac...
 - They are passive when it comes to rebuking their children.
 - They stand by while they join themselves to those that God has cursed and say nothing.
 - If you are like that, perhaps you need Nehemiah to deal with you!
 - **Nehemiah 13:23-27: In those days I also saw Jews *who* had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. ²⁴ And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. ²⁵ So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, “You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. ²⁶ Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. ²⁷ Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?”**

TRANS> This is a big deal! And this brings us to the next point...

- B. That not only fathers, but also the elders in the church have a huge responsibility in this matter.
 1. If members in the church—in the covenant community of God’s people—align themselves with what God has cursed, the elders are to deal with them.
 - In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul instructs them to gather in the name of Christ, as His representatives, and to deliver such people over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh that they may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - They are not to be allowed at the communion table!
 - He warns them that leaving those with such conduct in the church will cause sin to spread like leaven within the congregation...
 - He warns them against the pride that thinks it won’t affect them!
 2. In our day, we have the sad example of the churches that have completely neglected church discipline.
 - How did so much false doctrine get into the mainline churches today?
 - How did it get started—how did it get a footing?
 - How did they end up embracing everything from sodomy to the denial that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation?
 - It was because they did not purge out the leaven and now the whole church is leavened and has excluded those who do follow Christ.
 3. We must never take matters into our own hands!
 - We must do what God says in His word.
 - And His word tells us plainly, in 1 Cor 5:11-13: **But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually**

immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. ¹² For what *have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?* ¹³ But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”

- The instructions are very clear...we are to deal with those who are in the church—and God will deal with those who are outside the church.
 - This is a responsibility that He has given to us and we dare not set aside in the name of gentleness or in fear that we will make people angry or that we will not be able tolerate the ugly things they might say about us.
 - The kingdom of God is too important for men to be petty about these things!
 - The souls of believers are too important!
 - No my brothers and sisters, this is not something to trifle with!

C. And in fact I would urge that all members should be concerned about this matter.

1. Yes, as an individual, it is your responsibility to go to anyone who is overtaken in a fault and to try to restore them (Gal 6:1).
 - You are not to just leave them to perish, and if the elders are not acting, then what is stopping you from starting the process...
 - You go to them and if they will not hear, bring them before the elders!
2. Don't let anyone join the precious church of Jesus Christ, the people who are appointed for blessing, to those who are appointed for a curse!
 - Why would you stand by when someone is joining the church to what God has cursed?
 - **2 Cor 6:16: And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”**

Conclusion:

It can be rather discouraging to consider where the church is in our day.

- Surely, if God should leave us to our own way, we would utterly destroy ourselves.
 - We are no different than His people were in the time of the judges—or in the time of the kings—always in need of deliverance.
 - Even before the first century was out, the Lord was having to send His word to the churches to warn them against destroying themselves by joining to what God had cursed.
 - There are the letters in Revelation that Jesus dictated to John to the seven churches—and several them contain such warnings...
- But there is hope! Consider our text...
 - The sovereign hand of God is very evident here in preserving Jacob!
 - It is not that Jacob is so strong, and not that Rebekah is so strong, and certainly not that Isaac is so strong...

- It is that the LORD had determined that He would bless Jacob and so He does!
 - He brings about such circumstances that Jacob must flee from his angry brother, and it is this that stirs up Rebekah to ask her husband to send Jacob away to find a wife.
 - It is true that she and Isaac were grieved by the pagan wives of Esau, but it is also sadly true that what finally stirred this family to action to send Jacob to find a wife who was not accursed was the threat of Esau...
 - God used that in their weakness to keep them from destruction.
- My dear brothers and sisters, if the LORD were not looking after the church, it would have perished long ago.
 - Our hope is not in ourselves, but in our faithful Lord who promises to keep us to the end.
 - But let no one presume that you are being kept if you are joining yourself to what God has cursed!
 - *Keeping* does not look like Esau, who took pagan wives because he was cut off...he was not kept.
 - *Keeping* looks like Jacob, who went to take a wife who was not accursed...he was kept because he did not join to a curse.
- Perhaps even today, God will use His word to keep you from joining yourself to what God has cursed!
 - This sermon is Him bringing His word to you because He loves you and wants to warn you and preserve you from joining yourself to destruction.
 - That is how He works, and if we repent, our LORD Jesus is always ready to receive us.
 - **2 Cor 6:17-18: Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. ¹⁸ I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,” says the LORD Almighty.**