

The LORD Has Granted Me Success!

Genesis 26:34-27:46

“The LORD has granted me success.”

Jacob spoke these words to his father, Isaac.
Coming out of his mouth they were a bold face lie.
Jacob is deceiving his father to get what he wants.
Ironically, and despite his deception, Jacob speaks truth.

The LORD does grant Jacob success in a scheme that should never have worked.
But it is not because of Jacob’s nefarious scheme that it worked.
The LORD of Isaac works in spite of it.

Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau are all players in the story. Each, in their own way, tries to control and manipulate the blessing for their own purposes. But our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is not a God who is controlled or manipulated.

The struggle to control or manipulate lives in each of us. We want our own way. And we use others to get what we want.

Rebekah uses Jacob.
Esau plays the victim.
Jacob uses Rebekah and Isaac, and even God.
And Isaac uses his position of privilege and authority.

They each are driven by what they want to control and manipulate.

The blessing of God is not obtained through control or manipulation.
The question before us is, “Why does Jacob come out on top?”
“Why is he successful in his scheming?”
“Does God allow Himself to be controlled and manipulated?”

Of course not! But when God chooses to redeem a person, he deals with them as they are. Jacob is a deceiver and a usurper. That is who he is. God will change him. But that change will take time and will only be completed when we see Jesus - face to face.

As the hearts of Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Rebekah, are exposed before you, may God use them as a mirror to help you see the remnants of sin still living in you.

And may that exposure drive you to Jesus Christ.

It is His blood alone that is able to cleanse you completely.

And it is the Spirit of Christ alone that will renew a right spirit within you.

Read Genesis 26:34-27:46.

The account of Jacob stealing the blessing from Esau is flanked on both ends by brief statements about Esau's marriage to Hittites.

These book ends are inserted to keep us from feeling sorry for Esau.

In the story, Esau is the loser. And it is easy to feel sorry for losers. But we are not supposed to feel sorry for Esau.

There are many things about living life before a Holy God that have not been made clear. God will write out His moral law on tablets of stone when He brings His people up out of Egypt.

But one thing that God has made perfectly clear to Abraham and Isaac is that the current inhabitants of the land of Canaan are under His curse. The Canaanites may not be "worse" than the other peoples of the world. They are not even as bad as they will become. But in Genesis 15:13-16, God told Abraham that his descendants would drive the Canaanites out of the Promised Land.

Genesis 15:18-21 ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites,

the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

For Abraham, or his descendants, to join in marriage to those under God's curse is a demonstration of "despising the Covenant Promises."

This is why Abraham sends his servant to find a wife for Isaac from among his own people far away.

Abraham's relatives are themselves sinful. But they have not had God's curse pronounced over them. And when Rebekah chooses to leave her family, she is attaching herself to Isaac.

Esau goes in the opposite direction. He is leaving his privileged position to join with those who are directly under God's curse. Esau is unwilling to submit his own desires to God's Word.

Esau's disdain for the Covenant Promises makes life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah. We are told that Esau's wives make life "bitter" for them.

On a gut level, Esau has not only despised God, but has slapped his parents in the face.

Rebekah expresses this in verse 46.

46 Then
 Rebekah said to Isaac,
 "I loathe my life
 because of the Hittite women.
 If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women like these,
 one of the women of the land,
 what good will my life be to me?"

Esau has not simply fallen in love with women who happen to be Canaanites. He has rejected his faith entirely and joined himself to other gods.

As much as it may be tempting to feel sorry for Esau because he is the victim of an evil plot, remember that he has rejected the God of his father.

We are not finished thinking about Esau, but we are now redirected to think about Isaac.

The story begins with Isaac's belief that his time on earth is short. And before he dies, he wants to impart the blessing to Esau.

We know that Isaac is more than 100 years old. We also know that he lived to be 180.

So, even though he thinks he is about to die, he does not die for some time.

We are told that his eyes are dim.

He may not be totally blind, but he is close.

At the same time, Isaac's physical blindness is a sign of his spiritual blindness.

Isaac is the one who bears the blessing.

He is privileged with the responsibility to pass the blessing on to the next generation.

But Isaac will attempt to use his privileged position to accomplish his own personal ambitions. Isaac wants to have some personal control over who receives the blessing from him.

This part of the story is still mysterious to me. It seems odd that what Isaac pronounces would have any true power to direct the blessing.

And yet, in this instance it does.

We are even told that Isaac pronounces the blessing "by faith".

Hebrews 11:20 ²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

There is something personal about the transference of the blessing.

Isaac must first believe that there really is a blessing. And then, by faith in that blessing, he must personally, as an act of his soul, pass it on.

It is not enough that the document of the birthright be in Jacob's hand.

There must be a personal statement of blessing pronounced by Isaac.

Isaac - "... that my soul may bless you."

Jacob - "... that your soul may bless me."

I need to do more thinking on how and why this blessing works. But for now, we must move on.

It is Isaac's privilege to pass on the blessing of Abraham. But that privilege does not extend to going against God's stated Word. Rather than submission to God's Word, Isaac seeks to control and manipulate the blessing according to his own personal desires.

Isaac has the statement of God to Rebekah that Jacob will be the heir of the blessing, not Esau.

Isaac must also be aware that Esau has sold his birthright to Jacob.

And Isaac has watched his son show disdain for the covenant by marrying Hittite women.

And yet, Isaac is stubbornly determined to give his blessing to Esau.

What is Isaac's motivation?

He likes Esau better than Jacob.

Esau brings him tasty meat to eat.

Esau's motivation is so shallow. As I read the text I am ready to throw the first stone at him.

And yet, God's Spirit whispers in my ear, "Not so fast. Are you really so unlike Isaac that you are qualified to cast the first stone?"

How often in my prayers do I pray more fervently for those I happen to like?

How often do I wish blessing only upon those who have been kind to me?

Jesus says that we are "bless" those who curse us.

And yet, if I am honest, I really want God to save the people that I like.

And the people that I like less, often get short changed.

Showing favoritism is just as much a problem in our hearts as it was in Isaac's. And we can be like Isaac in that we show favoritism in our prayers and in our hopes of who we want God to save.

When we do this, we are attempting to bend the will of God to our will. We are trying to control the blessing according to our personal wants and wishes. Where exactly is the line between offering up to God our desires in prayer, which are acceptable and good, and seeking to control and manipulate God, which is evil, is not easy to discern. But there is a line. And we are called to search our hearts to discover what is selfish and evil in us.

Thankfully, God does not dispense the blessing according to our personal whims. He will not be controlled in that way.

Isaac will be unsuccessful in his attempt.
In the end, it will be Isaac's will that bends.
In the next chapter Isaac freely gives the blessing to Jacob.

Next we are brought to consider the ambitions of Rebekah, beginning in verse 5.

What are we to think of Rebekah and her plan of deception?
Rebekah's objective is in line with God's. She wants the blessing to go to Jacob.

But Rebekah's confidence is not in God but in herself.
Rebekah believes that Isaac's attempt to manipulate the blessing will succeed unless she acts immediately and decisively.

Decisive action is not wrong. But if it does not flow from an attitude of humble trust, it is not pleasing to God.

Rebekah believes that unless she personally helps the promise along, it will fail. God's Word will be overcome by the disobedience of her husband.

Rebekah is not acting out of faith. She is trusting in her own scheming.

Just because her scheming happens to be in alignment with God's plan does not make her scheming good.

It is not simply that she lies to her husband that she is at fault. It is that she treats God's Word of promise as if it is dependent upon men to be fulfilled.

One sign that Rebekah's trust is in herself is seen in her words to Jacob.

"Obey my voice as I command you."

"Only obey my voice."

And when Jacob even hints at questioning her plan, she calls down upon herself any curse that he might receive if the plan fails.

Rebekah is not trusting in God's sovereign hand. And she is certainly not encouraging Jacob to trust in God. All she can say is, "Obey my voice!" It is as if she is saying, "I am the voice of God to you!"

How contrary is Rebekah's attitude to one of true faith and obedience!

But Rebekah's attitude is a challenge to all who may have good intentions. We may have the right goal, but are we working towards that God by trusting in our own strength and strategies and good planning? Or are we ourselves trusting in our Sovereign God to fulfill his promises?

Rebekah's attempt at control and manipulation is the most difficult to see in ourselves. When we believe ourselves to be on the right side of some issue, we often will justify all sorts of terrible means to accomplish the good we desire. Because we see ourselves as "in the right", we treat others with harshness and cruelty. We convince ourselves that we had to do what we did. Otherwise evil would have triumphed.

Again, it is so hard to discern the line between promoting what we believe to be good and right, which we all must do, and having an unhealthy passion to get achieve that goal at all costs.

Rebekah may equate obedience to her as obedience to God, but they are not the same.

Rebekah's scheme succeeds, but she does not get what she wants!

Next, we are to consider the ambitions of Jacob.

We can certainly say that Jacob cares about the blessing. He cares so much that he is willing to consider his mother's plan.

Truth be told, Jacob's attitude is very much like his mothers. Only he is the beneficiary of his scheming. At least with Rebekah, she wants the blessing for Jacob. He participates in all the scheming for his own benefit.

Jacob does not give a thought to whether he is trusting God. He has some concern that the plan will not work and he will bring cursing down upon himself. But in the end, he becomes a full participant.

Jacob attempts to pull the wool over his dad's eyes. He will succeed. But he also is attempting to pull the wool over God's eyes. In this he fails.

Basic to Christianity is the belief that God sees into the depths of our soul. God sees everything. We cannot fool him. We cannot deceive God into giving us the blessing. We cannot hide the darkness of our hearts from God. We cannot pretend to be someone that we are not.

Jacob tricks his dad. But he does not receive the blessing through lying and deceit. He receives the blessing because of God's sovereign grace. In fact, much of the rest of Jacob's life will be God's training Jacob to seek the blessing correctly.

Jacob is not obeying God out of faith and with a humble heart. He is obeying his mother and his own ambition.

The deception is elaborate:

They must cook a meal that will taste like the one Esau would prepare.

Jacob must wear Esau's clothes.

Jacob has to strap onto his arms and neck the skin of a young goat. Once he is dressed in this elaborate costume, he is ready. He tells his dad a bold-face lie. I am Esau your firstborn. When Isaac asks him how he was able to return so quickly, Jacob attributes to God's blessing, what has been his own scheming.

"because the LORD your God has granted me success." (v. 20)

This is the heart of the problem. Jacob may care about the blessing. But he does not care about the God who blesses. Jacob takes the name of the LORD in vain. He refers to Yahweh as "your God."

The irony is that what he says is true. God is giving him success. But He does so in spite of Jacob's scheming.

With every step, the deception goes deeper and deeper. Jacob's actions become more detestable. And Isaac's blindness becomes more laughable.

But God stands above it all and continues to work out His gracious plan.

Isaac feels the arms and neck of Jacob. Isaac doubts when he hears Jacob's voice, but only momentarily. Isaac eats the food and wine, so his taste deceives him. Isaac smells the garments and is deceived. Lastly, Isaac is deceived by the kiss of Jacob. In another time and place, Judas will think that He deceives Jesus with a kiss. He too was only carrying out the Divine will. Is it not eerie to think that the one who is receiving the blessing acts in such evil ways?

Isaac has been trying to control God. But in this whole episode God allows Isaac to be deceived such that Isaac is the one controlled, carrying out the will of God.

The blessing that Isaac bestows is essentially the Abrahamic blessing. But there is a greater emphasis on the fruitfulness of the land. And that of ruling over brothers.

These slight adjustments reflect the priorities of Isaac. Still, Isaac speaks truth, if unknowingly.

We see God's sovereign hand in the timing. Jacob had scarcely left the room, when Esau comes rushing in. Isaac has been trying to control God. When he discovers that it is he who has been controlled, he trembles violently.

He recognizes that he has been beaten.

It is not so much the words that he previously pronounced were unbreakable.

It is more so that Isaac recognizes that what he spoke was what God wanted him to say.

And he recognizes that God's Word spoken through him is not reversible.

In this way, Isaac shows himself to be a man of faith. He is brought to submit to the will of God.

He may not entirely like it in his feelings, but he knows that he cannot reverse what has been done.

Esau's reaction is very different.

He too wants to manipulate the Blessing of God.

He thinks that he can make the blessing his simply by crying.

He throws a temper tantrum.

I remind you. Esau is not the victim here. He has despised the birthright.

He only cares for the blessing in so much as he can get what he wants now.

He has been outfoxed, he thinks, by Jacob.

Jacob has stolen his blessing.

The truth is that Esau has been outfoxed by God.

God will not be manipulated by Esau, or by any of his covenant children.

When a kid throws a temper tantrum to get what he wants, he is manipulating his parents.

When parents give in, they are teaching their children to treat God in the same way.

The child is not approaching his parents in humble submission and trust. He is trying to control his parents. God wants us to approach him with our personal requests, but He wants us to do so in faith and submission.

Esau in no way recognizes the evil of his own heart. He is not repentant for his despising the covenant. He is only demanding that he get what he wants then and there.

Hebrews 12:16-17 ¹⁶ (See to it) that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Esau found no chance to repent. That means that he could find no repentance in his heart. He could only see the situation through the lens of his own selfishness.

He demands of his dad to give him some sort of blessing. What he gets is a type of anti-blessing.

Esau had a right to the blessing but has lost it completely. This has occurred because of God's sovereign grace in electing Jacob. But it also fits accurately with Esau's character. He deserves to lose it all.

Instead of repenting of his own attitude towards God, Esau comforts himself by living with bitter hatred and the thought of revenge. Esau's hatred is consistent with Satan's hatred for all of God's children. Esau is unwilling to admit it now, but his hatred is really against God.

Rebekah had hoped for a good life with her son, Jacob, living a life of blessing. Because of her scheming, she will have to send Jacob away. Remember, she has never really trusted God. So, even though Jacob has the blessing, she still does not think that God will protect him.

She continues to trust in her own planning. And what makes sense to her is to send Jacob to her brother, Laban. She again tells Jacob to “obey her voice.” The irony is that Rebekah will die before Jacob returns. And even now, Rebekah has no peace. She certainly has reason for sadness. But her lack of submitting her heart to that of God’s has cost her true peace and joy.

46 Then
 Rebekah said to Isaac,
 "I loathe my life
 because of the Hittite women.
 If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women like these,
 one of the women of the land,
 what good will my life be to me?"

Because Rebekah is not really submitting her heart to God and walking by faith in Him, her children have the power to either give her meaning or take it away. Where is the line between healthy suffering over the apostasy of our children and attaching our own meaning and purpose to them? I do not know. But there is such a line. And Rebekah crossed it.

We are to learn from Esau.
We are to learn from Jacob.
We are to learn from Rebekah and Isaac.

We are to learn one specific lesson:
Manipulation and control are not the means by which we attain the promised blessing.
How do we obtain the promised blessing?
By humble repentance and faith.

The only hope of the blessing being fulfilled is the sovereign grace of God.

How often do we think that the blessing will be thwarted by the actions of men?

If the blessing depended upon men, there would be no hope.

Every person in this story is messed up.

Isaac = the bestower of blessing

Esau = the wrongful seeker of blessing

Rebekah = the schemer after the blessing

Jacob = the usurper of the blessing

And yet, our Great and Mighty God moves the history of redemption along.

And He is able to sovereignly train his people in true sanctification.

Pagan religion is an attempt to manipulate God's blessing through our actions.

Biblical religion receives God's blessing by faith, and then works to bring our hearts into submission to God's perfect will.

Do not underestimate the remnants of sin within you.

The temptation to trust in our own efforts rather than in Christ alone is real and lifelong.

Galatians 3:1-3 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Living a life of faith and humble devotion to God does not come easy.

If possible, we would even turn our religion into getting what we want.

Godliness is found in the submission of our will to that of the Father.

Jesus modeled this attitude to us in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The blessing is ours because of the obedience of Jesus Christ alone.

And it is received by us by faith alone in Christ alone.

In the end, as we stand around the throne of Jesus in glory, we will not be praising our schemes or manipulation or craftiness.

We will be praising the sovereign grace of God alone.

We will be saying truthfully with Jacob: The LORD has granted me success!

Amen!