



The Sermon

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Genesis 27:18-46

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"Disorders of a Dysfunctional Family"

TRANSCRIPT

So, if you have your Bible, please turn with me to Genesis chapter 27, and we'll just dive right into this, because I have been assigned a lot of verses and I don't run. So, verses 18 to 46 is what I have, so I want to begin by reading the passage, as I always do. You can follow along with me in your Bible. In case you're wondering, I preach from the New American Standard Version, which I think is the most accurate translation into the English language. The Legacy has recently come out and may have a slight advantage, though it may not, so I really like the New American Standard, the 1995 Edition.

So, I want to begin reading in verse 18. The title of this message is "Disorders of a Dysfunctional Family. Disorders of a Dysfunctional Family." We really begin in the middle of the chapter, and I'll circle back and set the context after I read this, after I pray. But we begin really in midstream.

And so, in verse 18 we read, "Then he came" - and the "he" refers to Jacob. "Then he came to his father and said, 'My father.' And he said," - referring to Isaac - 'Here I am. Who are you, my son?' Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau,' - lying through his teeth - 'I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me.' Isaac said to his son, 'How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?' And he said, 'Because the Lord your God caused it to happen to me.' Then Isaac said to Jacob, 'Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.' So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, 'The voice is the voice of Jacob,

but the hands are the hands of Esau.' He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. And he said, 'Are you really my son Esau?' And he said, 'I am.' So he said, 'Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you.' And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Please come close and kiss me, my son.' So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, 'See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed; now may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine; may peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; and be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you.'

"Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. Then he also made savory 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.' Isaac his father said to him, 'Who are you?' And he said, 'I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.' Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, 'Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.'

"When 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!' And he said, 'Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.' Then he said, 'Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.' And he said, 'Have you not reserved a blessing for me?' And Isaac replied to Esau, 'Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?' Esau said to his father, 'Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.' So Esau lifted his voice and wept.

"Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, 'Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, and away from the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve; but it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck.' So Esau bore a grudge against 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 near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.' - let me repeat that - 'then I shall kill my brother Jacob.'

"Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, 'Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?'

"Rebekah said to Isaac, 'I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?'" This is the long reading of the Word of God. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, this is Your Word, and for reasons known to You, You chose to include all the details that we see in this narrative. Every detail is important. Every jot, every tittle, every line, every phrase is inspired by You, and is profitable, and is for our instruction. So as we go through this, help us to give attention to what has been recorded here, and not only with understanding, but with relevance for our own lives, so we are entirely dependent upon You for this to come to pass. So may there be two preachers standing in this pulpit today: one visible, one invisible. May the visible preacher be invisible, and may the invisible preacher become most audible in our ears this day. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

I've entitled this section "Disorders of a Dysfunctional Family." And what we see in this passage is that a family can be either a little bit of heaven or a little bit of hell, and not much in between. We see that a family can be either a blessing or it can be a burden. A family can either be filled with harmony and happiness or it can be filled with friction and fighting. There can be abuse of parental authority. There can be sibling rivalries. There can be hurt feelings. There can be relationships that are permanently strained for decades. And the thing about a family is that it's so up close and personal. The thing about a family is it's so permanent. You can choose your friends, but you cannot choose your family. And you can walk away

from a friend, but you cannot walk away from family. And there's no escaping a family, especially one that is dysfunctional; it's here to stay.

We need to be reminded that there are no perfect families, there are just some families who have less issues than other families; but every family has issues. Whenever you have imperfect people living under the same roof there will always be issues. Proverbs 14:4 says, "Where no oxen are, the manger is clean." The point is very clear: "Wherever there are no oxen in a stall, there's no manure. But wherever there are oxen in a manger or a stall, there will always be refuse." And as that applies to the family, the family would be so wonderful if it weren't for the people, because the people bring manure. And so the point applies: "Wherever you have a husband and wife and children, there are issues, and there can be a highly dysfunctional family."

That's what we see here, even among the patriarchs: Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Even among the patriarchs there is this supremely dysfunctional family. Isaac is a hypochondriac father who's always fearing his death. There is Rebekah who's a mother; she's a manipulative, controlling woman, who played favorites and played one son over another. There's Jacob who is a deceiver and a liar, as we know; and Esau is controlled by the flesh and is filled, in this passage, with revenge, and literally wants to murder his own brother. This was not *Little House on the Prairie*. This is not *Father Knows Best*. You put all these characters together under one tent and you have a formula for disaster.

Maybe you can relate to this. Maybe you came from a dysfunctional family. Maybe you're living in a dysfunctional family; I don't know. Maybe you had an abusive father. Maybe you had an alcoholic father. Maybe you had a scheming, controlling mother, who was pulling the strings behind the scenes. Maybe you had a revenge-seeking brother or a hateful sister. Maybe there was lying sibling rivalries. If so, then you can relate to what we see in this passage; this has your name written all over it. Hardly another passage could be more relevant to you than what we're looking at here. Maybe you're a parent who has children who have not followed in the teaching that you gave at home. If so, then this passage will speak to you. It'll be very easy for you to place yourself in this passage.

Now I need to set this scene because we started in the middle of the chapter; and at this point, Isaac is an old man, though he will live for many

more years. He is blind, he cannot see, and he has asked for his firstborn son Esau to go out into the field and hunt game for him so that he would have something to eat. And so Rebekah has overheard the conversation, and that's not a coincidence. She, no doubt, has had her ear where maybe it should not have been listening to everything that's going on, and now sticks her nose into the middle of this situation and says to her favorite son Jacob, "Why don't you go down to our flock and quickly grab two goats and come sprinting back, and also the skin as you prepare the two goats. Put the skin on the back of your neck and on your arms, and you can beat your brother back here and you can secure the blessing." And so mom is behind the scenes just manipulating and controlling this like an airport controller in a tower. And so that's where this scene picks up. This is a supremely dysfunctional family.

So as we walk through this passage there are five things I want you to note, and the first is, "Jacob's deception," - that's verses 18 and 19 - "Jacob's deception," because we see here Jacob living up to his name, which means "the deceiver." True to form, here he is loud and clear deceiving.

So it begins in verse 18, "And he" - Jacob - "came" - he's come from the flocks with two goats - "to his father" - Isaac who is blind and old - "and said, 'My father.'" Now that sounds so innocent, doesn't it? But he's playing up to his father. "And he" - Isaac - "said, 'Here I am. Who are you, my son?'" He's blind as a bat. He cannot see his own son standing right before him.

Verse 19, "Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau your firstborn.'" He is a liar; and this is a huge part of this dysfunctional family. It's not a family of truth-tellers, it's a family who really traffics in that which is untrue. They twist the truth, they cover the truth, they withhold the truth, they hold back the truth, and they manipulate the truth for their own personal ends and their own personal gains.

And so, he says, "I'm Esau." He is breaking what will become the ninth - well really, first of all, he breaks the fifth commandment, which is to "Honor your father and your mother." And you dishonor your father and sin against God when you do not tell the truth to your parents. And when you cover that up, you are breaking strategically the first and most important commandment of the second half of the Ten Commandments. But on top of that, he is also breaking the ninth commandment. And God has written His

Law upon the heart of every man. Though the Law will not be issued until Sinai in Exodus chapter 20; nevertheless, this sense of conscience in right and wrong has been inscribed upon Jacob's heart, and he now is sinning against his own conscience, he is sinning against his father, and he is sinning against God, by not telling the truth, by boldly and brazenly lying to his father.

And so, verse 19 continues, "I have done as you told me. Get up, please," - he says this to his father - "sit up and eat." So his father obviously was reclining, laying back perhaps like on a sofa. "Get up and eat my game," - which is animal meat - "that you" - Isaac - "may bless me." And so we need to just stop right here for a moment and be reminded of the absolute necessity of telling the truth. We need to be careful what we say to one another, and we need to be careful what we say within the house, especially to our parents and to our siblings and to our children, that we would always be truth-tellers, because whenever you tell one lie, you're going to have to tell two, three, four, five, or however many other lies, to keep the first lie alive; and it will eventually come back to you. "And be sure your sin will find you out," the Bible says.

So part of this dysfunctional family is they just can't tell the truth, speak the truth to one another. It's a family of liars. Now, second - or before I say second I just want to plead with you to not violate your own conscience, and to never shade the truth, and to always be forthright within your own home. The end does not justify the means, we must be truth-tellers. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Now, second, "Isaac's discernment." Beginning in verse 20, this pretense by Jacob is not convincing to Isaac, and he begins to exercise some discernment that this just isn't adding up. In other words, Jacob couldn't quite pull this off, and so Isaac begins to ask some questions. So, verse 20, "Isaac said to his son," - thinking that he is addressing Esau but not quite certain that he's addressing Esau - "he says, 'How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?'"

Now he sent Esau out into the field, who knows, out into a forest, out into where caves are, the surrounding terrain, to hunt down some game, to capture it, to clean it, to prepare it, to bring it back all the way from the parameter of their land. And now all of a sudden here is Jacob, he's back in a flash. All he did is go around the corner to where they have some

livestock, some goats, and he just quickly grabbed two goats, and he's back in a flash. And so Isaac is just beginning to ask some questions: "How is it you came back so quickly?" There's some suspicion here.

And so, "Jacob said," – this gets worse. And what I want you to see is no one ever just commits one sin. Whenever you commit one sin, you will inevitably commit other sins to go along with this sin. Sin never travels solo, sin is always accompanied by other sins. It's like a hole in the dike, and it's not just a few drops that come through, there will be a surge of water that will come through a hole in the dike; and that's exactly what is happening here.

And so, look what he says: "Jacob said, 'Because the Lord your God caused it to happen to me.'" This is worse. Jacob is on a slippery slope and he is going downhill fast, deeper into sin. He begins by dishonoring his father, he begins by not telling the truth; now he is using God's name in vain. God has not caused this to happen; if anything, the devil has caused this to happen. Jacob has caused this to happen, Rebekah has caused this to happen, the flesh and carnality have caused this to happen. It would have been far better if he had just left God out of this. But now he's dragging the name of God through the mud into this situation and assigning sin and evil to God. You don't want to go there; just leave God out of this.

And so, verse 21, "Then Isaac said to Jacob," – the father said to the second son – 'Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.'" We can easily detect here that the wheels are spinning in Isaac's mind and he's beginning to put two and two together: "This can't really be Esau, can it?" But he hasn't been able to connect all the dots yet, but there's a bit question mark in his mind, and he says, "Come close, that I may feel you," – because he knows that Esau is hairy – "and I just want to feel your arm."

Well, this manipulative mother Rebekah has already told her son Jacob, "After you clean the animal, take the skins and put it on your arms," because she knows her husband. She knows her husband will be checking his arms and he will feel the hairy skin of the goat and he will assume that it's Esau. So really, Rebekah is a liar as well, and she is a deceiver, and she's probably more equally yoked with Jacob than she is with her own husband.

So, verse 22, "So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he" - Isaac - "felt him" - Jacob - "and said," - now this is interesting - 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.' I mean, he recognizes the voice of Jacob, it has that distinctive sound, that distinctive pitch, that distinctive tone to it. But the hands just so feel like Esau's hands, because they're rough and calloused and thick. And so the wheels continue to turn as this is coming more sharply into focus, and he is exercising discernment. And he's not so naïve as a parent to just assume that whatever a child says is the truth; that would be very gullible and very naïve, that this requires further probing, this requires further investigation and auditing of this.

So, verse 23, "He" - Isaac - "did not recognize him," - Jacob - "because his hands were hairy like his brother's hands." So he still has not solved this deception; he will still need some more information. But in the midst of his confusion, he decides to go ahead and bless the one who is standing in front of him, still presuming that it is Esau. And so we read at the end of verse 23, "So he" - Isaac - "blessed him" - Jacob, which would confirm the transfer of the birthright.

But this isn't over. And if you're a parent, you just keep picking the scab, and you just keep asking more questions, because this just doesn't add up, and you dig a little bit deeper to get to the truth. So we read in verse 24, "And he" - Isaac - "said, 'Are you really my son Esau?'" Obviously there is a huge question here and he still suspects that this may not be Esau; but he can't see. "And he" - Jacob - "said, 'I am.'" Again, he is dishonoring his father, and he is lying to his father, and he's an accomplice to the crime with Rebekah; but more than that, he is sinning against God and sinning against heaven by not telling the truth.

So, verse 25, he's still not finished with this investigation. So, verse 25, "So he" - Isaac - "said, 'Bring it to me, I will eat some of my son's game, that I may bless you.'" And one reason he wants him to bring it is so that he can smell him a little better, so that he can hear him a little better, so that he can feel him a little better.

"And he" - Jacob - "brought it to him," - Isaac - "and he" - Isaac - "ate; and he" - Jacob - "also brought him wine and he drank." Is this not a dysfunctional family? Is this not the antithesis of what a family should be? Is this not just pulling everyone down. No one person in a family just



suffers, the whole family suffers, everyone under the same roof suffers. There is a fly in the ointment that flavors the whole, and everyone suffers some anguish to this. Whenever we sin it never only affects us, it always affects others.

So, verse 26, "Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Please come close and kiss me, my son.'" And verse 27, "So he came close and kissed him," and this is close to being a Judas kiss, because he's betraying his father. "Then he smelled the smell of his garments, and he blessed and said, 'See, the smell of my son is like the smell of the field which the Lord has blessed.'" He even smells like Esau, because Esau's always with animals, and Esau's always in the field, and Esau is always sweating and having animal blood on him and has a certain odor to him. And so now Jacob smells much like Esau, and so the father is, "OK, maybe, maybe not."

Verse 28, "Now may God give you of the dew of heaven," - that's a metaphor for "water" that is necessary to grow crops and feed livestock - "and the fatness of the land," - that's referring to the productivity of the field and from the livestock: "May the Lord bless you with common grace, may the Lord bless you with prosperity" - and an abundance of grain and new wine."

Verse 29, "May peoples serve you," - in other words, may you have authority over others - "and nations bow down to you," - may you be given military victories - "be master of your brothers" - may you have preeminence in the family - "cursed be those who curse you," - may you be mighty in defense - "and blessed be those who bless you," - and he's repeating the words of the Abrahamic covenant from Genesis 12:1-3.

So before we move on - and this is such a tangled web - these verses speak to the need that we have for discernment, that every parent needs discernment. Isaac lacked it, and we often do as well. Discernment is a God-given, Spirit-given ability to differentiate between the true and the false, between truth and error as it is unfolding in the house. If you're a parent, you need discriminating discretion to separate between what's right and what's wrong; and at times it takes the wisdom of Solomon to know what took place upstairs in that bedroom.

When I was in the ninth grade I used to go to college basketball games. I had a friend who would always invite me, and we sat on the front row. His dad had these season tickets; and we were just in the premiere place, literally right behind the bench of the visiting team. And I went to virtually every home game that Memphis State University played, and I remember that one night there were playing Texas A&M, Mark. It's not often Memphis State would play a high school. But in this case, they were.

And so I'm sitting right behind the Texas A&M bench and I'm noticing those warmups that they had for pre-game, that dark maroon color – and those were so good looking. And when the game was over their star player left his warmup right there on the hardwood court, so I assumed it had my name written on it. And I remember quickly – and I think this is the only thing that I have stolen as best as I try not to remember – and I picked up that warmup and put it inside my coat, and then left with the family that always brought me, hopped in their car, I sat in the back. They pulled up in front of my house. My mother would always be waiting up for me. I never walked into my house when my mother was not right there. There would be no way to get passed the Gestapo.

So, I'm in the ninth grade; and I come walking into the house as guilty as guilty could be, and I take one step into the kitchen with this warmup tucked under my coat, and my mother's first words were, "What have you done?" That's impossible that she knew that. She has seven eyes, eyes in the back of her head. And I immediately was found out, and she made me write a letter and take this – she drove me to the post office – and mail it back to Texas A&M University and return the stolen property.

Every parents needs discernment like my mother exercised with me. And this is where Isaac is not sharp enough to pick up the caper that is going on with Rebekah and Jacob. And the greatest discernment you will have is when you're in the Word of God and the Spirit of God is in you giving you an ability to see into situations for what they really are.

Well this leads, third, to "Isaac's discovery." Isaac's discovery in verse 30: "Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob," – and he blesses Jacob unknowingly; he thinks he's blessing Esau – "and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, when Esau his brother came in from his hunting." This is like a virtual TV show, one of

those dysfunctional families in some big city, and they're just all incapable of living a normal life.

And so the deceiver goes out, and Esau comes in, but they don't pass each other. Verse 31, "Then he" - Esau - "also made savory food," - which means tasty or delectable - "and brought it to his father; and said to his father, 'Let my father arise, eat of his son's game, that you may bless me.'" That's the same speech that the father just heard, it's word for word the same speech. And finally lightbulbs are coming on for Isaac, and he's beginning to sort this out with greater clarity.

And verse 32, "Isaac his father said to him, 'Who are you?' And he said, 'I'm your son, your firstborn son Esau.'" And he recognizes Esau's voice and no doubt can smell Esau.

Verse 33, "Then Isaac trembled violently." The English does not do it justice. It's three Hebrew words that are just compounded together and it's translated as two words into our Bibles "trembled violently," but it means literally "trembled a trembling a great unto excess." He is shaking as if he is standing in an earthquake. In fact, this very same word is used in Exodus chapter 19 when God descends out of heaven to Mount Sinai, and the mountain is on fire and the mountain begins to shake, and God brings the Ten Commandments, and that whole mountain is just vibrating. It's the very same word that is used here, and Isaac is shaking like a leaf in a storm. He is shocked, he is stunned that one of his sons has lied to him and has deceived him, and there is a con game that is going on here.

"And he said," - verse 33 - "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of it before you came, and I blessed him?" Well, he's beginning to understand it's his twin brother whose name means "deception." So what happens at the end of verse 33 here is truly amazing, because I would have said, "Given this bit of information I withdraw the blessing, and I will act upon the truth." But Isaac does the opposite, and he says, "Yes, he" - referring to Jacob - "shall be blessed." And Isaac refused to withdraw the blessing he had bestowed upon Jacob despite the false premise; and so he retains the blessing.

So, how do we explain this, that he blesses the deceiver and will not take back this deception? And this is a hard knot to untie, because the text

doesn't really give us the answer. But there's another text that helps us greatly, and that is Hebrews 11:20. And John Knox always said, "If one text is not clear, another text will make it clear."

And in Hebrews 11:20 we have some light to shine upon this episode, and it says, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob." By faith, based upon the information that he was given at that time, he exercised good faith in God based upon what was made known to him. He did the best he could with what was made known to him, and he laid his hands upon Jacob and blessed him. Isaac acted in faith, so he could not, he did not believe that it was right to take it back.

Now here's a point of application for us. This is a comforting word for Christian parents who have children who've gone astray. Proverbs says, "Train up a child in the way he should, and when he is old he will not depart from it." We need to understand that's not a promise, that's just a general observation of life for which there are many exceptions. You cannot interpret a proverb like you interpret a promise in another portion of Scripture.

And there are many children who even resent how they were raised by their Christian parents: you were too strict, you were too fundamental, you were too protective, you were too this or that. But what we learn from this is that just as Isaac acted in faith, in good faith to be a father to his son Jacob, based upon the information that was in front of him, even so, Christian parents, as they retrace their steps in the past, "How did our child go astray here? How did this child take a different path?" Rather than beat yourself up, you need to remember that you did the best you could with what information you had at that time in your life.

And there's a sense in which when parents finally have it figured out, the children have left home; but while they're at home they're still acquiring the wisdom and discernment that they need, but it's not necessarily all there. And so as you think about your past as a parent, you need to give thought to this: if this is true, that you acted in faith, you acted in good faith and you did the best that you could with where you were in your spiritual life and in your walk with the Lord – and God knows that – that child bears great responsibility for the choices that they make. And you cannot live your Christian life for them; as they make their own bed, they're going to have to lie in it. And so here we see in this dysfunctional family, as Isaac lays

hands on Jacob thinking it is Esau, Hebrews 11:20 says he did it by faith, faith in God, and faith based upon the objective truth that was made known to him at that point in time.

As you find yourself here today and a Christian parent and a child that has not followed your teaching to the extent that you would have wanted them to, just remember: if this is true, that if you acted by faith with what you knew at that time, you have done what God would require of you. And it may be said by a child, "You were not a perfect parent," the same can be said by the parent to the child, "You were not a perfect child either."

So, let me at least give you one more heading. Beginning in verse 34 I want you to see "Esau's distress." And I can tell by the look on some of your faces that what I just said has hit home with you, and this is the Lord's passage for you, I think to encourage you.

Verse 34, under Esau's distress, "When Esau heard the words of his father," - meaning the blessing that was upon Jacob - "he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry," - I mean, there's so many Hebrew words just jammed in together here, and all you need to know is that this wasn't a whimper or a snuffle, this was an outcry of despair with a loud voice and a mighty force, with great intensity; Esau just wails and just roars, as there is so much pent up emotion that comes flooding out of his broken heart - "and said to his father," - and now he begins to beg his father and plead with his father - 'Bless me, even me also, O my father!'" He's pleading for what he has so foolishly lost. But you know what? It's too late.

And there are matters in life that can never be recovered, and there are lines that when we cross those lines there's no returning back. There is the grace of God, and there is the forgiveness of God, and God is a God of a second chance, but there are also decisions in life that can never be reversed that we live with for the rest of our life. And we also need that sober reminder. And so Esau's learning this painful lesson, that he has just gambled away his birthright for nothing, for a meal; and now is begging and pleading with his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" He may have been on his knees, he may have had his arms wrapped around his ankles.

Verse 35, "And he" - Isaac - "said, 'Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.'" Now his eyes are wide open. Isaac's eyes

are wide open, he knows exactly what has taken place. It's like the rising of the sun, it starts off with a little light, then more light, until it's noonday light. Well, noonday light has now dawned on Isaac.

Verse 36, "Then he," - Esau; and Esau's fuming right now, he is fuming - 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? My brother has the right name,' - which means "deceiver." I mean, literally it means taken by the heel. And the idea is an overreach and taking what is not yours with deception. I mean, Jacob is a conman. Jacob is a gypsy, which just means to gyp people out of what they have just with manipulation - 'for he has supplanted me these two times?'" And the first time was in chapter 25 by taking his birthright. And now in chapter 27, by taking his blessing.

Verse 37, "But Isaac replied to Esau, 'Behold, I have made him your master,' - he now has the primacy in the family among the siblings; he is the head and you are the tail - 'and all his relatives I have given to him as servants,' - it's not just Esau, but his whole family will be subservient to Jacob - 'and with grain and wine I have sustained him.' - meaning Jacob - 'Now as for you' - Esau - 'then, what shall I do, my son?'"

Verse 38, "Esau said to his father," - this just drips with sadness - 'Do you have only one blessing, my father? Do you not have two blessings? Could you not lay one hand upon Jacob but lay the other hand upon me? Could you not divide the blessing? Could you not divide the birthright? Isn't there something in the savings account? Could there not be a blessing for me?' - and then he pleads and he begs - 'Bless me, even me, O my father.' So Esau lifted his voice and wept." I did a word study on this; it just means to weep bitterly. It means to ball like a baby. It means to burst into tears from a broken heart. There's no self-control. You sound like a wounded animal. You're so devastated by what has happened.

Verse 39, "Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, 'Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,' - what that means is - it's hard to understand when we read it in English - what that means is there'll be no produce and there will be no multiplication of livestock that will come to you - 'and away from the dew of heaven,' - there'll be no rain for you - 'from above.'" This isn't a blessing, this is a curse.

"By your sword you" - Esau - "shall live," - in other words, you're going to have to fight for everything you have for the rest of your life, nothing is going to be handed to you; you're going to have to swim upstream for the rest of your life, the wind will never be at your back; you're going to have to - "by your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve." You will be, as it were, a slave to your brother, and handmaiden to your brother, and you will carry out his desires. "But it shall come about when you" - Esau - "become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck," which just simply means at some point in the future you will be free from the slavery to your brother. And what a strange thing it is that Isaac could not even recognize the son who was standing right in front of him, yet he knows the future of his sons, as God gives him spiritual eyes to see.

Well, I need to bring this message to a close, as I see the clock. And I want to conclude by just saying this - we'll pick this up next week in midstream. Maybe this has described the dysfunctional family in which you grew up. Everyone does not grow up in a Norman Rockwell painting. Everyone does not grow up where there's peace in the valley. And if this describes you, I want to end by trying to lift you up, and I want to give you four words by way of conclusion.

Number one is "trust." Trust in the sovereignty of God who foreordained that you would be born into this family. You had nothing to do with it, God was dealing the deck; and it was God with inscrutable wisdom, perhaps for reasons known only to God, that He had you born into the family into which you were born. You must trust God that God had reasons for this. It may be so that you would be broken and humble. It may be to help you identify with the man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief, the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be so that you can minister to others who have gone through a similar experience. But God has His reasons.

There is nothing that happens haphazardly in this universe; so you need to trust that in the midst of the storm in which you once lived, God, with perfect wisdom, placed you there; and it may not be apparent to you, but it is apparent to God. He does all things well. And there needs to be a sense of acceptance that this is the path that God marked out for me from before the foundation of the world. And He is a good God, and you must come to accept it as the sovereign will of God.

The second word is "love." You need to love your family; and that may be one of the hardest things you will ever do. But the fruit of the Spirit is love; and God will give you a supernatural love and a supernatural capacity to show mercy and compassion to your family that may have harmed you and even abused you. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5, at the end of that chapter, 41-46 in there, that we're to love our enemies. And He says, "Even the Gentiles love those who love them. The mark of the one who's in the kingdom is the one who loves those who are unlovely." And God loved us when we were unlovely, and so you must love those who have hurt you the most.

The third word is "witness," to witness to them. Perhaps that is why God planted you in that family, that broken, dysfunctional, messed up family, that you would be the one who would bring the gospel back into that stormy house and to speak of the love of God that is in Christ Jesus the Lord.

And the fourth and final word is "pray." Pray for God to intervene and for God to change the hearts of people in that family. And God can do what you could never do. God can intervene. He did it to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road, He can do it in your home. Pray, and do not ever give up praying.

Well, today we have looked at one dysfunctional family. And the last thing I will say is if today you are without Christ, you are in a dysfunctional family that is far worse. It is a family of unbelievers, of those who are liars and thieves and homosexuals and lesbians and effeminate and covetous; that's your family; it's a horrible family. And if you're without Christ, you're in the world, and you have siblings that are ruled and controlled by the devil, just like you are. And there's only one way of escape out of that dysfunctional family of darkness, and that is to be born again, and that is to be converted, and that is to be brought into the family of God. And there's only one way to leave this dysfunctional family of unbelievers and enter into the kingdom of God and the family of God and to become a child, a son, a daughter of God, and that is for you to commit your life to Jesus Christ.

And you have an opportunity right now this very moment in your heart of hearts to do business with God and come to the end of yourself and repent of your sins, and throw yourself upon the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the friend of sinners. He has come to seek and to save that which is



lost. And perhaps today is the day for you at last to be found by the Savior. He's left the 99, He's gone out into the dark. And perhaps He's searching for you today, and perhaps this message was just His way to bring you to the truth, and as you stand at the intersection now of life, for you to make that one greatest decision, the decision to believe in Jesus Christ, to entrust your life to Him. And if you have never done that, I extend to you this greatest of all offers. And maybe no one else in this room knows that it's you that needs to be saved; but you know, because the Spirit of God is convicting your heart, and the Spirit of God is making this painfully aware within your soul. There is no rest for you, and there is no peace for you until you close this deal with God.

And so if you would commit your life to Christ this very moment, I promise you, I promise you the heavy weight of sin would be removed from your shoulders, the peace that surpasses all comprehension would flood your soul. It would clothe you in the perfect righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ. He would adopt you into His family with all of the rights of an adult son. He would come and live inside of you, and He would begin to walk with you every step of life's journey. You would never be alone again. He would be with you, even unto the end of the age. And when you die, He would escort you into heaven and into a mansion that He's been preparing for you, and you would live forever and ever with God and with Christ. You would drink from the river of life, you would eat from the tree of life. You would know joy unspeakable and be full of glory if you would but commit your life to Christ.

There is no reason for you not to accept Christ, except you would choose to hang on to your sin. Give up dirt for diamonds. Give up your sin for the Savior who has taken your sin problem far away. Do so right now this very moment in your heart. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for what's recorded in Your Word. Thank You for this section of Scripture that is so unusual in many ways, yet it is so real to life. It is so relevant to where so many of us have lived or are living. So Father, work in every heart here today. Do not allow the devil to snatch the seed that has been sown. May it fall upon fertile soil that will bear much fruit, in Jesus' name. Amen.