

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS CHAPTER 27

In this chapter we return to the typical story of the struggle between Esau and Jacob. Esau had profanely sold the birthright to Jacob; but Esau hopes he shall be never the poorer, nor Jacob the richer, for that bargain, while he preserves his interest in his father's affections, and so secures the blessing. Here therefore we find how he was justly punished for his contempt of the birthright (of which he foolishly deprived himself) with the loss of the blessing, of which Jacob fraudulently deprives him. Thus this story is explained, **#Heb 12:16,17,**

"Because he sold the birthright, when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected."

For those that make light of the name and profession of religion, and throw them away for a trifle, thereby forfeit the powers and privileges of it. We have here,

I. Isaac's purpose to entail the blessing upon Esau, **#Ge 27:1-5.**

II. Rebekah's plot to procure it for Jacob, **#Ge 27:6-17.**

III. Jacob's successful management of the plot, and his obtaining the blessing, **#Ge 27:18-29.**

IV. Esau's resentment of this, in which,

1. His great importunity with his father to obtain a blessing, **#Ge 27:30-40.**

2. His great enmity to his brother for defrauding him of the first blessing, **#Ge 27:41-46 &c.**

Ver. 1.

Here is,

I. Isaac's design to make his will, and to declare Esau his heir. The promise of the Messiah and the land of Canaan was a great trust, first committed to Abraham, inclusive and typical of spiritual and eternal blessings; this, by divine direction, he transmitted to Isaac. Isaac, being now old, and not knowing, or not understanding, or not duly considering, the divine oracle concerning his two sons, that the elder should serve the younger, resolves to entail all the honour and power that were wrapped up in the promise upon Esau his eldest son. In this he was governed more by natural affection, and the common method of settlements, than he ought to have been, if he knew (as it is probable he did) the intimations God had given of his mind in this matter. Note, We are very apt to take our measures rather from our own reason than from divine revelation, and thereby often miss our way; we think the wise and learned, the mighty and noble, should inherit the promise; but God sees not as man sees. See **#1Sa 16:6,7.**

II. The directions he gave to Esau, pursuant to this design. He calls him to him, **#Ge 27:1.** For Esau, though married, had not yet removed; and, though he had greatly grieved his parents by his marriage, yet they had not expelled him, but it seems were pretty well reconciled to him, and made the best of it. Note, Parents that are justly offended at their children yet must not be implacable towards them.

1. He tells him upon what considerations he resolved to do this now (**#Ge 27:2**):

"I am old, and therefore must die shortly, yet I know not the day of my death, nor when I must die; I will therefore do that at this time which must be done some time."

Note,

(1.) Old people should be reminded by the growing infirmities of age to do quickly, and with all the little might they have, what their hand finds to do. See [#Jos 13:1](#).

(2.) The consideration of the uncertainty of the time of our departure out of the world (about which God has wisely kept us in the dark) should quicken us to do the work of the day in its day. The heart and the house should both be set, and kept, in order, because *at such an hour as we think not the son of man comes*; because *we know not the day of our death*, we are concerned to mind the business of life.

2. He bids him to get things ready for the solemnity of executing his last will and testament, by which he designed to make him his heir, [#Ge 27:3,4](#). Esau must go a hunting, and bring some venison, which his father will eat of, and then bless him. In this he designed, not so much the refreshment of his own spirits, that he might give the blessing in a lively manner, as it is commonly taken, but rather the receiving of a fresh instance of his son's filial duty and affection to him, before he bestowed this favour upon him. Perhaps Esau, since he had married, had brought his venison to his wives, and seldom to his father, as formerly ([#Ge 25:28](#)), and therefore Isaac, before he would bless him, would have him show this piece of respect to him. Note, It is fit, if the *less be blessed of the greater*, that the greater should be served and honoured by the less He says, *That my soul may bless thee before I die*. Note,

(1.) Prayer is the work of the soul, and not of the lips only; as the soul must be employed in blessing God ([#Ps 103:1](#)), so it must be in blessing ourselves and others: the blessing will not come to the heart if it do not come from the heart.

(2.) The work of life must be done before we die, for it cannot be done afterwards ([#Ec 9:10](#)); and it is very desirable, when we come to die, to have nothing else to do but to die. Isaac lived above forty years after this; let none therefore think that they shall die the sooner for making their wills and getting ready for death.

Ver. 6.

Rebekah is here contriving to procure for Jacob the blessing which was designed for Esau; and here,

I. The end was good, for she was directed in this intention by the oracle of God, by which she had been governed in dispensing her affections. God had said it should be so, that the elder should *serve the younger*; and therefore Rebekah resolves it shall be so, and cannot bear to see her husband designing to thwart the oracle of God. But,

II. The means were bad, and no way justifiable. If it was not a wrong to Esau to deprive him of the blessing (he himself having forfeited it by selling the birthright), yet it was a wrong to Isaac, taking advantage of his infirmity, to impose upon him; it was a wrong to Jacob too, whom she taught to deceive, by putting a lie into his mouth, or at least by putting one into his right hand. It would likewise expose him to endless scruples about the blessing, if he should obtain it thus fraudulently, whether it would stand him or his in any

stead, especially if his father should revoke it, upon the discovery of the cheat, and plead, as he might, that it was nulled by an *error personae*--a *mistake of the person*. He himself also was aware of the danger, lest ([#Ge 27:12](#)), if he should miss of the blessing, as he might probably have done, he should bring upon himself his father's curse, which he dreaded above any thing; besides, he laid himself open to that divine curse which is pronounced upon him that *causeth the blind to wander out of the way*, [#De 27:18](#). If Rebekah, when she heard Isaac promise the blessing to Esau, had gone, at his return from hunting, to Isaac, and, with humility and seriousness, put him in remembrance of that which God had said concerning their sons,--if she further had shown him how Esau had forfeited the blessing both by selling his birthright and by marrying strange wives, it is probable that Isaac would have been prevailed upon knowingly and wittingly to confer the blessing upon Jacob, and needed not thus to have been cheated into it. This would have been honourable and laudable, and would have looked well in the history; but God left her to herself, to take this indirect course, that he might have the glory of bringing good out of evil, and of serving his own purposes by the sins and follies of men, and that we might have the satisfaction of knowing that, though there is so much wickedness and deceit in the world, God governs it according to his will, to his own praise. See [#Job 12:16](#), *With him are strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceiver are his*. Isaac had lost the sense of seeing, which, in this case, could not have been imposed upon, Providence having so admirably well ordered the difference of features that no two faces are exactly alike: conversation and commerce could scarcely be maintained if there were not such a variety. Therefore she endeavours to deceive,

1. His sense of tasting, by dressing some choice pieces of kid, seasoning them, serving them up, so as to make him believe they were venison: this it was no hard matter to do. See the folly of those that are nice and curious in their appetite, and take a pride in humouring it. It is easy to impose upon them with that which they pretend to despise and dislike, so little perhaps does it differ from that to which they give a decided preference. Solomon tells us that dainties are *deceitful meat*; for it is possible for us to be deceived by them in more ways than one, [#Pr 23:32](#).
2. His sense of feeling and smelling. She put Esau's clothes upon Jacob, his best clothes, which, it might be supposed, Esau would put on, in token of joy and respect to his father, when he was to receive the blessing. Isaac knew these, by the stuff, shape, and smell, to be Esau's. If we would obtain a blessing from our heavenly Father, we must come for it in the garments of our elder brother, clothed with his righteousness, who is the first-born among many brethren. Lest the smoothness and softness of Jacob's hands and neck should betray him, she covered them, and probably part of his face, with the skins of the kids that were newly killed, [#Ge 27:16](#). Esau was rough indeed when nothing less than these would serve to make Jacob like him. Those that affect to seem rough and rugged in their carriage put the beast upon the man, and really shame themselves, by thus disguising themselves. And, *lastly*, it was a very rash word which Rebekah spoke, when Jacob objected the danger of a curse: *Upon me be thy curse, my son*, [#Ge 27:13](#). Christ indeed, who is mighty to save, because mighty to bear, has said, *Upon me be the curse, only obey my voice*; he has borne the burden of the curse, the curse of the law, for all those that will take upon them the yoke of the command, the command of the gospel. But it is too daring for any creature to say, *Upon me be the curse*, unless it be that curse causeless which we are *sure shall not come*, [#Pr 26:2](#).

Ver. 18.

Observe here,

I. The art and assurance with which Jacob managed this intrigue. Who would have thought that this plain man could have played his part so well in a design of this nature? His mother having put him in the way of it, and encouraged him in it, he dexterously applied himself to those methods which he had never accustomed himself to, but had always conceived an abhorrence of. Note, Lying is soon learnt. The psalmist speaks of those who, *as soon as they are born, speak lies*, #Ps 58:3 Jer 9:5. I wonder how honest Jacob could so readily turn his tongue to say (#Ge 27:19), *I am Esau thy first-born*; nor do I see how the endeavour of some to bring him off with that equivocation, *I am made thy firstborn*, namely by purchase, does him any service; for when his father asked him (#Ge 27:24), *Art thou my very son Esau?* he said, *I am*. How could he say, *I have done as thou badest me*, when he had received no command from his father, but was doing as his mother bade him? How could he say, *Eat of my venison*, when he knew it came, not from the field, but from the fold? But especially I wonder how he could have the assurance to father it upon God, and to use his name in the cheat (#Ge 27:20): *The Lord thy God brought it to me*. Is this Jacob? Is this Israel indeed, without guile? It is certainly written, not for our imitation, but for our admonition. *Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*. Good men have sometimes failed in the exercise of those graces for which they have been most eminent.

II. The success of this management. Jacob with some difficulty gained his point, and obtained the blessing.

1. Isaac was at first dissatisfied, and would have discovered the fraud if he could have trusted his own ears; for *the voice was Jacob's voice*, #Ge 27:22. Providence has ordered a strange variety of voices as well as faces, which is also of use to prevent our being imposed upon; and the voice is a thing not easily disguised nor counterfeited. This may be alluded to to illustrate the character of a hypocrite. His voice is Jacob's voice, but his hands are Esau's. He speaks the language of a saint, but does the works of a sinner; but the judgement will be, as here, by the hands.
2. At length he yielded to the power of the cheat, *because the hands were hairy* (#Ge 27:23), not considering how easy it was to counterfeit that circumstance; and now Jacob carries it on dexterously, sets his venison before his father, and waits at table very officiously, till dinner is done, and the blessing comes to be pronounced in the close of this solemn feast. That which in some small degree extenuates the crime of Rebekah and Jacob is that the fraud was intended, not so much to hasten the fulfilling, as to prevent the thwarting, of the oracle of God: the blessing was just going to be put upon the wrong head, and they thought it was time to bestir themselves. Now let us see how Isaac gave Jacob his blessing, #Ge 27:26-29.

(1.) He embraced him, in token of a particular affection to him. Those that are blessed of God are kissed with the kisses of his mouth, and they do, by love and loyalty, *kiss the Son*, #Ps 2:12.

(2.) He praised him. *He smelt the smell of his raiment, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed*, that is, like that of the most fragrant flowers and spices. It appeared that God had blessed him, and therefore Isaac would bless him.

(3.) He prayed for him, and therein prophesied concerning him. It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. And thus, as well as by their baptism, to do what they can to preserve and perpetuate the entail of the covenant in their families. But this was an extraordinary blessing; and Providence so ordered it that Isaac should bestow it upon Jacob ignorantly and by mistake, that it might appear he was

beholden to God for it, and not to Isaac. Three things Jacob is here blessed with:--

[1.] Plenty (#Ge 27:28), heaven and earth concurring to make him rich.

[2.] Power (#Ge 27:29), particularly dominion over his brethren, namely, Esau and his posterity.

[3.] Prevalence with God, and a great interest in Heaven:

"Cursed by every one that curseth thee and blessed be he that blesseth thee. Let God be a friend to all thy friends, and an enemy to all thy enemies."

More is certainly comprised in this blessing than appears *prima facie--at first sight*. It must amount to an entail of the promise of the Messiah, and of the church; this was, in the patriarchal dialect, *the blessing*: something spiritual, doubtless, is included in it. *First*, That from him should come the Messiah, who should have a sovereign dominion on earth. It was that top branch of his family which people should serve and nations bow down to. See #Nu 24:19, *Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, the star and sceptre, #Ge 27:17*. Jacob's dominion over Esau was to be only typical of this, #Ge 49:10. *Secondly*, That from him should come the church, which should be particularly owned and favoured by Heaven. It was part of the blessing of Abraham, when he was first called to be the father of the faithful (#Ge 12:3), *I will bless those that bless thee*; therefore, when Isaac afterwards confirmed the blessing to Jacob, he called it *the blessing of Abraham, #Ge 28:4*. Balaam explains this too, #Nu 24:9. Note, It is the best and most desirable blessing to stand in relation to Christ and his church, and to be interested in Christ's power and the church's favours.

Ver. 30.

Here is,

I. The covenant-blessing denied to Esau. He that made so light of the birthright *would now have inherited the blessing, but he was rejected, and found no place of repentance in his father, though he sought it carefully with tears, #Heb 12:17*. Observe,

1. How carefully he sought it. He prepared the savoury meat, as his father had directed him, and then begged the blessing which his father had encouraged him to expect, #Ge 27:31. When he understood that Jacob had obtained it surreptitiously, he *cried with a great and exceedingly bitter cry, #Ge 27:34*. No man could have laid the disappointment more to heart than he did; he made his father's tent to ring with his grief, and again (#Ge 27:38) *lifted up his voice and wept*. Note, The day is coming when those that now make light of the blessings of the covenant, and sell their title to them for a thing of nought, will in vain be importunate for them. Those that will not so much as ask and seek now will knock shortly, and cry, *Lord, Lord*. Slighters of Christ will then be humble suitors to him.
2. How he was rejected. Isaac, when first made sensible of the imposition that had been practised on him, *trembled exceedingly, #Ge 27:33*. Those that follow the choice of their own affections, rather than the dictates of the divine will, involve themselves in such perplexities as these. But he soon recovers himself, and ratifies the blessing he had given to Jacob: *I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed*; he might, upon very plausible grounds, have recalled it, but now, at last, he is sensible that he was in an error when he designed it for Esau. Either himself recollecting the divine oracle, or rather having found himself more than ordinarily filled with the Holy Ghost when he

gave the blessing to Jacob, he perceived that God did, as it were, say Amen to it.
Now,

(1.) Jacob was hereby confirmed in his possession of the blessing, and abundantly satisfied of the validity of it, though he obtained it fraudulently; hence too he had reason to hope that God graciously overlooked and pardoned his misconduct.

(2.) Isaac hereby acquiesced in the will of God, though it contradicted his own expectations and affection. He had a mind to give Esau the blessing, but, when he perceived the will of God was otherwise, he submitted; and this he did *by faith* ([#Heb 11:20](#)), as Abraham before him, when he had solicited for Ishmael. May not God do what he will with his own?

(3.) Esau hereby was cut off from the expectation of that special blessing which he thought to have preserved to himself when he sold his birthright. We, by this instance, are taught,

[1.] That *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy*, [#Ro 9:16](#). The apostle seems to allude to this story. Esau had a good will to the blessing, and ran for it; but God that showed mercy designed it for Jacob, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand*, [#Ge 27:11](#). The Jews, like Esau, hunted *after the law of righteousness* ([#Ge 27:31](#)), yet missed of the blessing of righteousness, *because they sought it by the works of the law* ([#Ge 27:32](#)); while the Gentiles, who, like Jacob, sought it by faith in the oracle of God, obtained it by force, with that violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers. See [#Mt 11:12](#).

[2.] That those who undervalue their spiritual birthright, and can afford to sell it for a morsel of meat, forfeit spiritual blessings, and it is just with God to deny them those favours they were careless of. Those that will part with their wisdom and grace, with their faith and a good conscience, for the honours, wealth, or pleasures, of this world, however they may pretend a zeal for the blessing, have already judged themselves unworthy of it, and so shall their doom be.

[3.] That those who lift up hands in wrath lift them up in vain. Esau, instead of repenting of his own folly, reproached his brother, unjustly charged him with taking away the birthright which he had fairly sold to him ([#Ge 27:36](#)), and conceived malice against him for what he had now done, [#Ge 27:41](#). Those are not likely to speed in prayer who turn those resentments upon their brethren which they should turn upon themselves, and lay the blame of their miscarriages upon others, when they should take shame to themselves.

[4.] That those who seek not till it is too late will be rejected. This was the ruin of Esau, he did not come in time. As there is an accepted time, a time when God will be found, so there is a time when he will not answer those that call upon him, because they neglected the appointed season. See [#Pr 1:28](#). The time of God's patience and our probation will not last always; the day of grace will come to an end, and the door will be shut. Then many that now despise the blessing will seek it carefully; for then they will know how to value it, and will see themselves undone, for ever undone, without it, but to no purpose, [#Lu 13:25-27](#). O that we would therefore, in this our day, *know the things that belong to our peace!*

II. Here is a common blessing bestowed upon Esau.

1. This he desired: *Bless me also*, [#Ge 27:34](#). *Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?* [#Ge 27:36](#). Note,

(1.) The worst of men know how to wish well to themselves; and even those who profanely sell their birthright seem piously to desire the blessing. Faint desires of happiness, without a right choice of the end and a right use of the means, deceive many into their own ruin. Multitudes go to hell with their mouths full of good wishes. The desire of the slothful and unbelieving kills them. Many will seek to enter in, as Esau, who shall not be able, because they do not strive, #Lu 13:24.

(2.) It is the folly of most men that they are willing to take up with any good (#Ps 4:6), as Esau here, who desired but a second rate blessing, a blessing separated from the birthright. Profane hearts think any blessing as good as that from God's oracle: *Hast thou but one?* As if he had said,

"I will take up with any: though I have not the blessing of the church, yet let me have some blessing."

2. This he had; and let him make his best of it, #Ge 27:39,40.

(1.) It was a good thing, and better than he deserved. It was promised him,

[1.] That he should have a competent livelihood--*the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven*. Note, Those that come short of the blessings of the covenant may yet have a very good share of outward blessings. God gives good ground and good weather to many that reject his covenant, and have no part nor lot in it.

[2.] That by degrees he should recover his liberty. If Jacob must rule (#Ge 27:29), Esau must serve; but he has this to comfort him, he shall *live by his sword*. He shall serve, but he shall not starve; and, at length, after much skirmishing, he shall break the yoke of bondage, and wear marks of freedom. This was fulfilled (#2Ki 8:20,22) when the Edomites revolted.

(2.) Yet it was far short of Jacob's blessing. For him God had reserved some better thing.

[1.] In Jacob's blessing *the dew of heaven* is put first, as that which he most valued, and desired, and depended upon; in Esau's *the fatness of the earth* is put first, for it was this that he had the first and principal regard to.

[2.] Esau has these, but Jacob has them from God's hand: *God give thee the dew of heaven*, #Ge 27:28. It was enough to Esau to have the possession; but Jacob desired it by promise, and to have it from covenant love.

[3.] Jacob shall have dominion over his brethren: hence the Israelites often ruled over the Edomites. Esau shall have dominion, that is, he shall gain some power and interest, but shall never have dominion over his brother: we never find that the Jews were sold into the hands of the Edomites, or that they oppressed them. But the great difference in that there is nothing in Esau's blessing that points at Christ, nothing that brings him or his into the church and covenant of God, without which the fatness of the earth, and the plunder of the field, will stand him in little stead. Thus Isaac by faith blessed them both according as their lot should be. Some observe that Jacob was blessed with a kiss (#Ge 27:27), so was not Esau.

Ver. 41.

Here is,

I. The malice Esau bore to Jacob upon account of the blessing which he had obtained, **#Ge 27:41**. Thus he went in the way of Cain, who slew his brother because he had gained that acceptance with God of which he had rendered himself unworthy. Esau's hatred of Jacob was,

1. A causeless hatred. He hated him for no other reason but because his father blessed him and God loved him. Note: The happiness of saints is the envy of sinners. Whom Heaven blesses, hell curses.
2. It was a cruel hatred. Nothing less would satisfy him than to slay his brother. It is the blood of the saints that persecutors thirst after: *I will slay my brother*. How could he say that word without horror? How could he call him *brother*, and yet vow his death? Note, The rage of persecutors will not be tied up by any bonds, no, not the strongest and most sacred.
3. It was a politic hatred. He expected his father would soon die, and then titles must be tried and interests contested between the brothers, which would give him a fair opportunity for revenge. He thinks it not enough to *live by his sword himself* (**#Ge 27:40**), unless his brother die by it. He is loathe to grieve his father while he lives, and therefore puts off the intended murder till his death, not caring how much he then grieved his surviving mother. Note,

(1.) Those are bad children to whom their good parents are a burden, and who, upon any account, long for the days of mourning for them.

(2.) Bad men are long held in by external restraints from doing the mischief they would do, and so their wicked purposes come to nought.

(3.) Those who think to defeat God's purposes will undoubtedly be disappointed themselves. Esau aimed to prevent Jacob, or his seed, from having the dominion, by taking away his life before he was married; but who can disannul what God has spoken? Men may fret at God's counsels, but cannot change them.

II. The method Rebekah took to prevent the mischief.

1. She gave Jacob warning of his danger, and advised him to withdraw for a while, and shift for his own safety. She tells him what she heard of Esau's design, that he comforted himself with the hope of an opportunity to kill his brother, **#Ge 27:42**. Would one think that such a bloody barbarous thought as this could be a comfort to a man? If Esau could have kept his design to himself his mother would not have suspected it; but men's impudence in sin is often their infatuation; and they cannot accomplish their wickedness because their rage is too violent to be concealed, and a bird of the air carries the voice. Observe here,

(1.) What Rebekah feared--lest she *should be deprived of them both in one day* (**#Ge 27:45**), deprived, not only of the murdered, but of the murderer, who either by the magistrate, or by the immediate hand of God, would be sacrificed to justice, which she herself must acquiesce in, and not obstruct: or, if not so, yet thenceforward she would be deprived of all joy and comfort in him. Those that are lost to virtue are in a manner lost to all their friends. With what pleasure can a child be looked upon that can be looked upon as no other than a child of the devil?

(2.) What Rebekah hoped--that, if Jacob for a while kept out of sight, the affront which his brother resented so fiercely would by degrees go out of mind. The strength of passions is weakened and taken off by the distances both of time and place. She promised herself that his brother's anger would turn away. Note, Yielding pacifies great offences; and even those that have a good cause, and God on their side, must yet use this with other prudent expedients for their own preservation.

2. She impressed Isaac with an apprehension of the necessity of Jacob's going among her relations upon another account, which was to take a wife, #Ge 27:46. She would not tell him of Esau's wicked design against the life of Jacob, lest it should trouble him; but prudently took another way to gain her point. Isaac saw as uneasy as he was to Esau's being unequally yoked with Hittites; and therefore, with a very good colour of reason, she moves to have Jacob married to one that was better principled. Note, One miscarriage should serve as a warning to prevent another; those are careless indeed that stumble twice at the same stone. Yet Rebekah seems to have expressed herself somewhat too warmly in the matter, when she said, *What good will my life do me if Jacob marry a Canaanite?* Thanks be to God, all our comfort is not lodged in one hand; we may do the work of life, and enjoy the comforts of life, though every thing do not fall out to our mind, and though our relations be not in all respects agreeable to us. Perhaps Rebekah spoke with this concern because she saw it necessary, for the quickening of Isaac, to give speedy orders in this matter. Observe, Though Jacob was himself very towardly, and well fixed in his religion, yet he had need to be put out of the way of temptation. Even he was in danger both of following the bad example of his brother and of being drawn into a snare by it. We must not presume too far upon the wisdom and resolution, no, not of those children that are most hopeful and promising; but care must be taken to keep them out of harm's way.