

For GC Discussion

- As we begin to look at the life of Jacob, ask yourself how he comes across in these passages, good and bad, and contrast him with Esau - what can we learn from their example/mistakes?

- What implications does the sovereignty of God have in our lives?

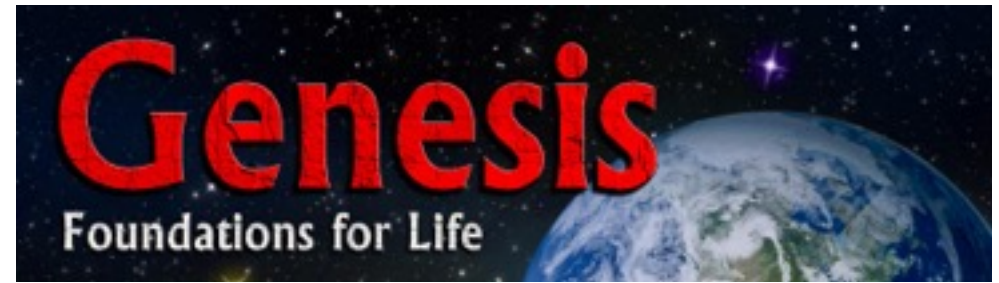
For the Kids

What did Jacob really want for himself? Did he go about getting it in the right way?

Next Week: we will study what happened to Jacob when he fled from his brother Esau.

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to *'The Awesome God You Are'* by Matt Redman. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



Week 13: Jacob: The Birth of a Schemer

Chapter 25:19-34 & Chapter 27

This Weeks Summary

This week we begin our look at the life of Jacob. We don't see him begin too well as he buys his brothers birthright and tricks his father into blessing him, but we know that the purpose of God for his life will stand despite all of this.

For Study:

The following verses all speak of or touch on the controversial subject of God's sovereignty which clearly comes out in our passage this week.

- **Isaiah 46**
- **Romans 9**
- **Psalm 135**
- **Job 40:1-42:6**
- **2 Chronicles 20:1-18**
- **Acts 4:23-31**
- **James 5:13-16**
- **Proverbs 16:33, 19:21, 21:1**
- **Ephesians 1:3-14**

This week we began to look at the life of Jacob. We saw he and his mother's scheming which denied Esau the blessing that seemed rightfully his, but before any of that we saw that God knew exactly what was going to happen as He says to Rebekah:

"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23)

God knew exactly what Jacob was going to do as he stole the blessing from his brother, but the New Testament takes it further than this as Romans 9:10-13 says:

'...when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."'

God didn't just know it would happen - He pre-determined that this was the way it would work out. The fact that Jacob overtook Esau as effectively the firstborn, and the carrier of the promise had nothing to do with anything either of them did, but had everything to do with the sovereign choice of God. This can be a hard teaching for us to grasp, but it's important for us to consider what the Bible says about it and how we should respond.

God can do anything He wants to anyone He wants

This is one of the clear teaching points of Romans 9 as Paul goes on to say:

'What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."... Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honourable use and another for dishonourable use?' (Romans 9:14-15, 21)

Paul is trying to rid the church in Rome and us as well of any kind of idea that we can somehow tell God what He needs to do, or influence Him in any of the choices He makes. To do so is arrogance, and Paul wants to well and truly kill that in God's people by emphasising the truth that God does whatever He wants, whenever He wants and is in no way at the mercy of anything we might do to change His decision. Paul basically says 'if God wants to create someone for the purpose of judging them He's perfectly

within His rights to do so. This is where we start to get nervous, but what we should allow this text to do is to humble us as it intends to, and to empty us of any self-sufficiency. This idea should also bring a real sense of godly fear and reverence for the God who can do whatever He pleases, and a gratitude that He has made a way for us to be free from our sin and escape from judgment, rather than an argument about where 'free will' fits into the equation. The honest truth is that this is a huge mystery - take the teaching of Romans 9 too far and we all become robots with a world view that is fatalistic (whatever is going to happen is going to happen and I can do nothing to change it), but the Bible doesn't allow us to get into this place because of our next point:

God still calls us to choose

Even in the verses following what we've looked at, Paul himself speaks in this way - he says that the Jews 'pursued a law that would lead to righteousness' but 'they did not pursue it by faith' (Romans 9:31-32). Paul's words don't suggest that the Jews were unable to pursue righteousness in the right direction because of God's influence over them, but that they chose the wrong direction themselves. All over the Bible there are frequent calls for us to choose the right, and reject the wrong - Joshua even uses those words - 'choose this day who you will serve' (Joshua 24:15). There is a certainty that the doctrine of God's sovereignty doesn't give us the freedom to sit back and just let life pass us by, but we must 'struggle' with the power that God makes available to us (Colossians 1:29), all the time knowing that it is He and not us who is in ultimate control of everything.

The sovereignty of God destroys any message of works

This is another of the main places Paul wants to lead the church in Rome to - he is teaching them that the law is not at the centre of God's purposes for saving humanity. It's there for a reason, but that reason is only to show us that we cannot be saved through our own efforts, and to point us to Jesus, through whom we can be saved if we confess with our mouths that He is Lord, and believe in our hearts that He was raised from the dead (Romans 10:9).

The Gospel doesn't leave us in control of our own destiny by giving us a way to earn our way to heaven, rather it shows us our complete inability to control our own destiny, and our desperate need to trust in the only One who has the ability to take away our sin and give us eternal life. It's the most humbling position we could possibly be in - to know we cannot help ourselves at all in any way - but that's exactly where God wants us to be, so we can learn to walk as Abraham did - by faith.