



We just heard the narrative read by the praise team, and now I want to read something I read as I was studying the text this past week. This commentator was talking about what the people gained by scheming. They wanted what they wanted, and what they got was, well, nothing but additional pain. Dods says the following: **They gained nothing, and they lost a great deal, by their wicked interference. They gained nothing; for God had promised that the birthright would be Jacob's, and would have given it him in some way redounding to his credit and not to his shame. And they lost a great deal. The mother lost her son; Jacob had to flee for his life, and, for all we know, Rebekah never saw him more. And Jacob lost all the comforts of home, and all those possessions his father had accumulated. He had to flee with nothing but his staff, an outcast to begin the world for himself. From this first false step onwards to his death, he was pursued by misfortune, until his own verdict on his life was, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life"** (Dods, as quot. in Ross, pp. 478-79). They gained nothing by scheming because God had already promised. Can you relate? I know the original audience, the wandering Israelites could relate. God had already told them what success was and that he guaranteed it for them. He promised a land and he promised to take care of them – whether circumstances made sense or not. . But did Israel always trust the Lord? No. And even though the Lord promised to take care of them and also lead them into the land he promised, did they trust him? No. In fact, there are many scenarios where the Israelites turned to other things to give them what God already promised to give them. Think of Moses on the top of Mt. Sinai. The people below decide to make a golden calf and worship it as though it was their leader. Think about when God calls them to go into the Promised Land, and they say, "Well, let's evaluate the scenario first. Then they come back and are too scared to go in." They keep trying to think they have to sceme in order to get what God has already promised to them!

Doesn't that sound foolish? Doesn't that sound tiring? Ok, now let's get back to you and me. Have you acted this way? **Do you trust God's promise and then trust him to fulfill it? Or, are you trusting your own senses, resorting to scheming to maintain whatever you think are the best blessings for you?** We gain nothing by scheming for God's promises. And so, I have another question: Will you and I open our hands instead of grip for control? With this backdrop, I want to share with you the main idea of the sermon: **Since God will always accomplish his will, his people must resist any dependence on their senses to distrust or scheme in order to attain spiritual success.** Lots of words, but it's all very important and interconnected.

Remember, as we enter into this narrative, that God promised to Jacob the blessing of Abraham. Through the seed that will come through Jacob, all the nations of the world will be blessed. Jacob will become the next leader. Sadly, Jacob has already revealed his scheming heart and he got Esau's birthright through the stew incident. The birthright means that Jacob is now in the "place" of firstborn even though he was born second. Now all that awaits is the actual blessing of the firstborn to be transferred to him. And that's where this chapter comes in. But what we find is a whole mess of people trusting in themselves instead of trusting in the Lord. As I was studying this past week, I came across this. It's long but easily understandable and beneficial as we dive into the story:

1. Dependence on the senses to distrust (vv. 1-4).

I word it this way because This narrative is filled with physical senses of taste, smell, touch, sound. Isaac depends on these senses and even declares that his blessing to Esau is because of his sense of taste. I guess Esau makes really great stew. Reread with me verses 1-4: When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.” ²He said, “Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. ³Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, ⁴and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.” ¹

Isaac says that if Esau makes the stew, he’ll be able to bless him. Did Isaac forget the Lord’s promise? I doubt it. Isaac justified his action based on his preferences. This reminds me of the famous proverb: ⁵**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.** ⁶**In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.** ⁷**Be not wise in your own eyes. . .**²

Now, you could with me say, “Isaac! Oh my goodness, man! C’mon, God told you exactly what he wanted and you went the other way.” But can we just take a break for a moment and ask ourselves if we do the same thing ever? I mean, this past week, I was talking in my home and was expressing some fear on a couple of occasions. You know what one of my daughters immediately said on both occasions? Faith over fear, dad! Faith-fueled not fear-fueled! Whoa, I preached that message. I know what God said and yet my senses, my emotions, can draw me right back without thinking about what God said. Can you relate to this?

Isaac is justifying on the basis of what he senses. In what ways may you be living that way now? You could think, “But I’m really good at X, Y, or Z and so I should be able to do A, B, or C,” but God has not freed you for that. Or, you could have clear commands in Scripture but justify because it just “feels right.” Or, maybe you’re just not thinking about God’s commands and you’re giving into the world’s way of handling things. I think Isaac’s actions ought to cause all readers of this narrative to pray: **Lord, reveal my deceptive senses and cause me to turn to you in dependence!**

Now, as the narrative moves on, we see another way we can react instead of trusting the Lord: through scheming.

2. The sense of scheming (vv. 5-29).

Rebekah overhears Isaac’s conversation with Esau, and she tells Jacob what she hears. She then tells him to obey her. And any good son wants to obey mom, right? But she is telling him to sin and he knows it. “Go get the goats and I’m going to make a favorite meal. Then you are going to take it to him and he will bless you.”

What’s Jacob’s response? It’s to jump right into the plan but to ensure that it’s going to work. He knows his brother’s build. He’s hairy. Jacob’s not. And Jacob’s fear is that he’ll be cursed for what he’s doing. Again, he knows full well that he deserves a curse, but he’s totally ok with deceiving as long as they come up with a workable plan. Rebekah doesn’t go further with the plan other than saying that the curse will move to her.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 27:1–4.

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Pr 3:5–7.

Wait, what?! This is so messed up and yet it also reveals the natural sense of a mother. A mother will sacrifice herself for her children. Rebekah, the woman through whom the promised seed was to come, is willing to take the curse for her son, who is to represent the future serpent crusher. And Jacob's totally willing to let mom take it! So, verse 14 starts with "So he went and took them and brought them to his mother. . . ." Rebekah makes the meal and gives it to Jacob and Jacob then goes into his father with the food.

Now, stop here and rewind for a moment. When Rebekah heard Isaac's plan, what did she do? She let fear fuel her and she reacted instead of acted in faith. She could have been the intended helper fit for her husband spoken to him. She could have turned to prayer. But she bypasses the Lord's promise and believes she has to do something to make sure everything goes according to plan. She connives and schemes and wastes energy on something that God had already promised to take place.

Are you allowing fear to fuel you? Or, are you letting your senses guide you and let you justify scheming? I know I mentioned a little while back that I think many Christians are living in fear in our current culture. I get it. There are so many things that are falling apart around us. But is it ever right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right? No. We must believe that Jesus is in control of America and even Ottawa County – whether or not people admit it or submit to him. Do you believe the Lord is working all things for good for you – even the painful things will submit to his good will for you. It could be your job, your home, your relationships. Whatever the case, do you trust him or are you still scheming? Will you turn from trusting your senses and rest? It's not worth the constant strain and fight and anxiety. God has always promised good to you! Will we trust him even when things don't make sense? I love God's words in Psalm 46:10: **"Cease *striving* and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."**³ Instead of striving, Rebekah (and we) could say what King Jehoshaphat said many years later in the midst of being overwhelmed: **"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."**⁴ That's it, Christian. Cease striving. Keep your eyes on the Lord. He who promised is faithful, right? Amen?

But we know this is not what either Rebekah or Jacob does. Jacob enters into his father's room with the food. Rebekah gave him Esau's clothes and goatskins to put on his skin so he'd feel and smell like Esau. Since his dad had bad eyesight he didn't have to worry about his looks. When he enters the room, Isaac is shocked at how quickly the food has come to him. And then Jacob goes further into the lie. He brings God into it. Isaac asks how the food came so fast, and look at the end of verse 20: "Because the Lord your God granted me success."⁵ This is blasphemy, according to God's Law. God did not grant him success. Rebekah and Jacob have deceived him to get the spiritual blessing.

Oh, I hope we see how horrible this is. How can we think that sinning is a great way to get spiritual blessing? If we choose to sin to get a spiritual blessing, then we must not really genuinely know what the blessing is. I still think Jacob was just thinking of power. He wasn't thinking about blessing the nations otherwise he wouldn't want to connive over his brother who would be a different nation. They don't get *spiritual blessing*. And I think the same is true for us. If we use worldly methods to emphasize spiritual realities, we may not understand the spiritual reality. After all, ultimately, the goal of *this particular blessing* is reconciliation with God and restoration with him so that humans and creation will exist in eternal joy. This isn't just about having power for 100 years. This is eternity.

³ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ps 46:10.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Ch 20:12.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 27:20.

Now, Isaac is a little confused but when he feels Jacob's hands, while he admits he sounds like Jacob, he says he feels like Esau. Jacob emphasizes he's Esau, and so he gives his dad the food. And his dad's senses are filled and satisfied.

Up to this point we have to admit again that there's a lot of work going on in order to get what God promised he would get. There's a very nasty tendency in the human heart to actually believe God needs us in order to do what we think he's not going to do. Trust in the Lord. Don't lean on your own understanding. Cease striving. When you don't know what to do, keep your eyes on him because:

3. God will always accomplish his will (vv. 26-40).

God had already said the elder will serve the younger. And so, Isaac's blessing communicates the blessing. Let's read together verses 28-29: ²⁸ May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. ²⁹ Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!" ⁶ This would have been Jacob's whether or not Rebekah and Jacob strove for it.

Now, after Isaac blesses Jacob, Jacob leaves, and almost immediately after, Esau shows up and asks for his blessing. Isaac asks who he is and Esau tells him and we're told that Isaac trembles violently and then essentially asks, "Who was it I blessed then?" Esau knows who. He cries out, we're told with "an exceedingly great and bitter cry," and pleads for his dad to bless him, too. But Jacob admits that the blessing has already been taken. It can't be revoked. So, Esau picks up on Jacob's name. The name that was supposed to cutely remind them of when the two were born and he took Esau's heel. A name that had connotations of protection. And Esau takes the negative meaning and says it was the right name. He really is a heel-grabber – a cheat.

Esau pleads with his dad for just one blessing. He weeps before Isaac, and all Isaac can say is this in verses 39-40: ³⁹ Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high. ⁴⁰ By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck."⁷

This doesn't sound like Jacob will be a blessing to Esau, does it? It doesn't sound like Esau will want to bless Jacob either, does it? The sibling rivalry continues on a national level. The striving of Rebekah and Jacob did not help anything.

So, what are some **implications for us**:

Our struggle for control (and reactions in fear), instead of resting in the Lord, neither changes God's perfect plan nor enhances our lives. I know what some may say to this. I've actually heard it: Well, my life isn't going to good when I'm trusting God, so I'm just going to do this anyway. My question is, "What were you trusting God *for*?" Maybe you were thinking that a spiritual blessing was some sort of financial security or respect or love or something else. And so maybe you think your efforts now are giving you what is best. But, just because it's what you want, does that mean it's best? Jesus said, "What does it matter if you gain the world but lose your soul?" What if God's spiritual blessing is greater and better than blessing that your senses can now perceive?

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 27:28–29.

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 27:39–40.

Others could say, “Well, God promises certain things, but I’m not confident he’s promising me *this thing over here* so I have to work hard for it.” It could be the salvation of your child, family member, friend. It could be a quiet and peaceable life as a citizen of this country. Whatever it is, you’re right. We don’t have promises to everything we think is best. But

We can be guaranteed that whatever God does give us is best. And therefore, we can also be confident that if God doesn’t give us something, then it’s best we don’t have it. I think the only way we will actually embrace these realities is by pure grace of God. You will resist him and resist these realities unless or until you know that not only is he in control of everything, but he is all good!

This is why we need Jesus. As I think of this narrative, I see how Jesus truly fulfills the blessing. He is the seed of the woman. He’s the serpent crusher. He doesn’t give into the serpent’s ways by lying and striving. Jesus submits to the Father. He submits to the Father by even coming to this sinful world, and he doesn’t come in the fullness of the revelation of his glory. He comes by taking on the limits of humanity. He then serves sinners. And he came in this world not to try to scheme for blessing but to die for others – and through death came the blessing.

Now, do you think this was easy for Jesus? Think again. Remember that the night before his crucifixion, facing the eternal, just wrath of God being placed on him. The wrath that sinners like you and me deserve, Jesus was facing. And that night before, he prayed and prayed and prayed and said, “Nevertheless, not my will be done, but yours.” He pleaded, “Let this cup pass from me,” but the Father strengthened him to move forward.

Jesus trusted the Lord with all his heart and did not lean on human understanding or senses. In all his ways, he acknowledge the Lord and the Lord made plain the way of crucifixion for sinners. Jesus did not strive against the plan. When soldiers then came to take him away, what did he do? He did not fight. He looked to the joy set before him and endured the cross.

And on the cross, Jesus took yours and my scheming and distrust. And in rising from the dead and ascending to Heaven, he now reigns with all blessing to give to those who trust him! That’s what Paul says in Philippians 2: ⁸**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.** ⁹**Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,** ¹⁰**so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,** ¹¹**and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**⁸

Oh Christian, our freedom is found in bowing the knee. Our Savior isn’t mean. He’s not vindictive. He loves and he’s gone before us, and he promises a glorious inheritance. He promises to grow you, grace you, strengthen you. He’s promised all good for you and me. Will he do it? Yes! **Jesus has given us success. He is worthy for us to cease our striving. Since God will always accomplish his will, his people must resist any dependence on their senses to distrust or scheme in order to attain spiritual success.**

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 2:8–11.