

Genesis 25:19-34

In last week's lesson we said goodbye to Abraham, **"the Friend of God."**

With his passing, Isaac became the only *surviving link* in the Messianic line.

So beginning at Genesis 25:19, the Holy Spirit turns our attention to God's chosen man, Isaac.

V 19-20 **"And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac:**

20: And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

21: And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and

**the LORD was intreated of him, and
Rebekah his wife conceived."**

These three verses cover a long period of time.

V 20 tells us that **"Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife,"** but V 26 tells us that he was 60 years old when he finally became a father.

Although he didn't have to wait as long as his father, still, 20 years was a long time.

And like his father, he knew God would fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant, and he knew this covenant must be channelled through his son.

So for 20 years, Isaac continued to pray in faith.

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There are several men in scripture that were
the result of an answer to prayer.

In every case, they were men that were
important to God's program.

For instance, Abraham and Sarah prayed for
their long awaited son, Isaac, who was
the next heir of the Abrahamic
Covenant.

Also, much later in history, Hannah brought
her petitions to the Lord, and in
answer to her prayer, God gave her
Samuel.

He was the greatest judge that Israel ever
had.

Then, of course, John the Baptist was an
answer to prayer.

Luke 1:7 tells us that Zacharias and
Elizabeth **"had no child, because that**

Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years."

Just like Abraham and Sarah, they were too old to have children, but God answered their prayers.

And Jesus said, concerning their son, "**Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.**"

So often times what seems to be unanswered prayer is merely a case of God's timing and His desire to mould the petitioner into a more fitting vessel for His use.

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No doubt in Isaac and Rebekah's case, God had His own reasons for this 20-year delay.

But physically speaking, the reason was simply that Rebekah was unable to conceive.

V 21 **"And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren."**

Of course, this situation was not Rebekah's fault, but it *was* her problem.

And this is an important fact when we consider Rebekah as a type of the church, and when we look at Isaac as a type of Christ.

Rebekah had been joined to her husband by her own personal decision.

She was wholly committed to her husband, but still she was barren.

And spiritually speaking, this condition can be all too common in believers.

As surprising as it might seem, accepting Christ as our Saviour does not

guarantee spirituality and
fruitfulness.

Even though a Christian has a genuine
relationship to Christ, even though he
or she is a child of God, a believer
can go on for years without exhibiting
any of the fruits of the Spirit, or
being an effective witness for Christ.
However, Christ is never satisfied with a
life of barrenness.

In John 15:8, Jesus says, **"Herein is my
Father glorified, that ye bear much
fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."**

So, like Isaac, the Lord desires
fruitfulness in our lives.

And for Isaac, that time finally arrived.

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However, as Rebekah soon found out,
fruitfulness was not without its
problems.

V 21-23 "---and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22: And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD.

23: And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

Previously, her life, although barren, had been peaceful, but now there was a battle going on inside.

And because Rebekah is the type of the bride of Christ, her unusual experience is very instructive.

As long as the believer is content to live a carnal or worldly life, he is not aware of a struggle, because the old nature is reigning supreme.

However, when he determines to meet the conditions of fruitfulness, the battle begins.

Yes, when his life ceases to be barren, special problems arise that were not very evident before.

Oh, all believers have two natures, but those whose lives are most fruitful will be the ones most aware of a struggle.

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However, although Rebekah was now aware of the problem, she really didn't understand it.

V 22 **"And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD."**

Yes, it was all quite mystifying, and I'm sure quite frightening, but she went to the right place for help.

And although the answer was perfectly true, I'm not sure that it did too much to ease her mind.

V 23 **"And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."**

Just like Rebekah, the Christian has two natures--you might say "**two manner of people**" dwelling within.

And just as Esau was the firstborn, our old nature came first.

However, it is in our new nature that our future life exists.

The old man will be left at the tomb, while the new nature will continue on into eternity with God's blessing.

So regardless of the battles that may go on in our life, the ultimate victory belongs to our new nature.

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From the standpoint of Old Testament types, I think Rebekah's experience has been very instructive.

However, from a completely different point of view, let's now consider God's wondrous creation.

I'm going to reread these verses to refresh our memory.

V 22-23 **"And the children struggled**

together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD.

23: And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

First of all, the scripture says, **"the children struggled together within her."**

Granted, Jacob and Esau had completely different personalities and a completely different set of values, but did the Holy Spirit really mean the children "**struggled together within her**"?

We're not just talking about movement here, which is quite common in these cases. No, it actually says "**the children struggled.**"

What a situation this must have been for Rebekah!

I'm sure it was hard enough to settle their squabbles when they were children, but this was just too much.

Think of it, these two children were fighting even before they were born!

So what about it? Is an embryo just a *thing*, or is it a child with its own personality?

Modern science would have us believe that an embryo is not really a person until the time of birth.

And it is true that we cannot remember anything that happened to us in the womb, but neither can we remember anything of our early babyhood either.

And even though we don't remember it, as a baby, we experience anger, contentment, and a variety of other feelings, so why not *before* birth?

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Certainly John the Baptist, in the opinion of his mother, experienced joy *before* he was born.

Luke 1:41-44 "And it came to pass, that,
when Elisabeth heard the salutation of
Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and
Elisabeth was filled with the Holy
Ghost:

42: And she spake out with a loud
voice, and said, Blessed art thou among
women, and blessed is the fruit of thy
womb.

43: And whence is this to me, that the
mother of my Lord should come to me?

44: For, lo, as soon as the voice of
thy salutation sounded in mine ears,
the babe leaped in my womb for joy."

And don't forget, this was not just one
woman's opinion. Verse 41 says she was
speaking under the influence of the
Holy Spirit.

V 41 **"Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."**

So let's take the scripture at its face value when it says **"the children struggled together within her."**

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Then there is the statement in V 23--**"Two nations are in thy womb."**

Couple that to a few other statements in scripture, and something quite amazing begins to emerge.

For instance, God said to Jacob in Genesis 35:11 **"---I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins."**

Also in the book of Hebrews, Paul bases his entire argument that Melchizedek's priesthood is greater than the

Levitical priesthood on the premise that Levi, who was born many years after Abraham, was actually *present* in Abraham's loins when he met Melchizedek.

We see Paul's conclusion in Hebrews 7:9-10.

"And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.

10: For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him."

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So the teaching that other people and indeed other nations exist in some form or other in their ancestors' bodies is quite common in scripture.

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Of course, modern science would consider this concept absolute nonsense.

And, of course, we have no real idea how this takes place, but God's Word says it does.

And with our present-day knowledge of DNA, we might be catching up to some of these concepts laid down in scripture.

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I read a very interesting book written by Dr. Edmund Brasset called, "A doctor's Pilgrimage."

As far as I could gather, Dr. Brasset was not a born-again believer, but he certainly was an excellent doctor, and also a fine, caring man, and a believer in God.

I would like to excerpt a few lines from his book concerning the subject of reproduction:

"The sperm is so tiny that it can be seen only with a very powerful microscope. The ovum, or egg, is much larger than the sperm, but much smaller than the very finest grain of sand.

Yet these two so very small particles contain within themselves patterns and designs for innumerable complex and wonderful things.

There is a pattern for the heart - itself so intricate that an entire lifetime is inadequate for its proper study - a pattern for a brain, lungs, liver, spleen, kidneys, stomach, adrenal glands, pituitary glands, pancreas, arms, legs, eyes - all of them so complex - and yet the design for them is there in those two little cells.

In these cells are written whether a man shall be tall or short, the color of his hair, the color of his eyes, the shape of his nose, the size of his mouth, the size of his muscles, whether he will be strong or weak.

It is written also whether he will be clever or stupid, whether he will be good at mathematics or have a skill for poetry, whether he will love music - all the complex mechanisms that makes a Paderewski or an Einstein is written here.

And the Pattern Maker! Where is He?"

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Well, we know who the Pattern Maker is, and we accept what He has written in His Word.

If He told Rebekah "**nations are in thy womb,**" then I think we should just believe Him.

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V 23 **"And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."**

Another amazing thing that we see here is the statement "**the elder shall serve the younger.**"

Although I definitely believe in free will, I cannot go far in scripture before I am confronted with the fact that God is sovereign.

Invariably I run into passages like Isaiah 49:1-3 where God spoke to Israel this

way--"Listen, O isles, unto me; and
hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD
hath called me from the womb; from the
bowels of my mother hath he made
mention of my name.

2: And he hath made my mouth like a
sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand
hath he hid me, and made me a polished
shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

3: And said unto me, Thou art my
servant, O Israel, in whom I will be
glorified."

And I don't think these words should be too
surprising to us.

After all, if God could not choose, then how
could Israel be His Chosen People?

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Also in Jeremiah 1:5, the prophet said "**Then**
the word of the LORD came unto me,

saying,

5: Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

And in Luke 1:15-16, we find that John the Baptist was chosen for his life's work before he was born--"**For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.**

16: And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God."

Now, I am aware of the theory that says God does not really predestine but simply foreknows what is going to happen.

That is a very comforting theory, and it allows us to bring God's actions down to a level we can understand.

But if that is true, then what am I to do with the chapter before us, and the comments made in Romans concerning this same chapter?

Let's look at Romans 9:10-15: **"And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;**

11: (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

12: It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

13: As it is written, Jacob have I

loved, but Esau have I hated.

14: What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15: For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

I think some of the words we see here, such as "the purpose of God," "election" and "calleth" are definitely at odds with the foreknowledge theory.

So am I teaching Calvinism?

I should hope not, for I do not believe that man-made theory.

No, I'm merely teaching the Word of God to the best of my ability, and the Word of God teaches free will and God's sovereignty.

So then, how do I reconcile the two?

I really can't, and there are other things
in scripture that I can't explain
either.

However, I must *accept both* or reject part
of God's Word.

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And not only is God sovereign, but He
continually amazes us by the way He
does things.

It is quite obvious to me that it was God's
purpose to make Jacob the heir of the
Abrahamic Covenant, not Esau.

However, because Esau was born first, and
that by only a few seconds, he would be
the natural heir.

Also, as it turned out, this situation
produced a great deal of conflict in
Isaac's family.

So, if God really wanted Jacob to inherit the Abrahamic Covenant, then why didn't He just make him the elder? It would have been so easy.

But He didn't, and we wonder why.

We can only say---"**how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!**" and then rest in the fact that He does all things well.

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In Old Testament times, the eldest son normally took precedence over his brethren.

It was a custom in Isaac's day, which later became a rule in Israel.

Yes, in Israel, even in the case of a man who had two wives, one of which was out of favour, the rule of the firstborn could not be altered.

We see that in Deuteronomy 21:16-17 **"Then**
it shall be, when he maketh his sons to
inherit that which he hath, that he may
not make the son of the beloved
firstborn before the son of the hated,
which is indeed the firstborn:
17: But he shall acknowledge the son of
the hated for the firstborn, by giving
him a double portion of all that he
hath: for he is the beginning of his
strength; the right of the firstborn is
his."

But we make a big mistake if we think that
God is bound by the rules He has set
down for mankind.

Oh, God is completely righteous, but He is
not obliged to abide by the rule of the
firstborn, and in many cases He has
not.

For instance, Abraham's and Sarah's lack of faith made Ishmael their eldest son, but God still held to His purpose of blessing Isaac.

And then there was the time when God sent Samuel to choose a king for Israel from among the sons of Jesse.

God didn't choose Jesse's eldest son, Eliab, even though he was the firstborn and also a good-looking fellow.

In fact, he was so well favoured that Samuel said, **"Surely the LORD's anointed is before him."**

Nor did God choose any of Jesse's other sons, and Samuel finally had to ask, **"Are all thy children here? And he said, There remain yet the youngest."**

And that's the one God chose.

So God does not always choose the elder.

In fact, in the case before us, He chose
Isaac's younger son, Jacob.

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Genesis 25:24-26 **"And when her days to be
delivered were fulfilled, behold, there
were twins in her womb.**

**25: And the first came out red, all
over like an hairy garment; and they
called his name Esau.**

**26: And after that came his brother
out, and his hand took hold on Esau's
heel; and his name was called Jacob:
and Isaac was threescore years old when
she bare them."**

We have already seen the struggle
experienced, and the struggle
explained.

Now, after Rebekah gave birth, we see the two natures behind the struggle *exposed*.

Never had two brothers been so at odds.

In fact, it appears they were in the midst of a struggle at the time of their birth.

Esau made his way into the world first and so became the firstborn, but Jacob had him right by the heel.

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And it is impossible that the two natures inside the Christian will not manifest themselves outwardly.

To a greater or lesser degree, they will affect our hands, our feet, and particularly our tongue for good or evil.

And depending on which one has the upper hand, we will dispense healing or hurt to those around us.

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As far as Rebekah's two sons were concerned, the older they grew, the more apparent it became that they were completely different individuals.

V 27-28 **"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.**

28: And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob."

Unfortunately, their personal differences had a bad affect on the family. In fact, it split it right down the middle.

Isaac loved Esau because he gratified his
fleshly appetites--"**he did eat of his
venison.**"

Yes, Esau's personal character did not seem
to concern Isaac as much as his ability
to bring home the bacon, or should I
say, the venison.

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Ishmael, in his attitude and his strengths,
is a picture of the old nature.

It says, *Love me for what I can do.*

It says, *Love me because I can gratify your
fleshly desires.*

However, Romans 14:17 says "-- **the kingdom
of God is not meat and drink; but
righteousness, and peace, and joy in
the Holy Ghost.**"

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On the other hand, V 28 tells us that

"Rebekah loved Jacob," and no reason is given for her love.

It wasn't what Jacob could do that won her heart. It was *who he was*.

She simply loved him for himself.

And Christ does not want us to love Him for what He can do for us, although in truth, He has done everything for us.

No, He wants us to love Him for Who He is.

When Peter returned from fishing, Jesus asked him one question: **"Lovest thou me more than these?"**

And when his answer wasn't quite satisfactory, Jesus asked him again, **"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"**

So in Jacob and Esau's case, both natures claimed their place in the family for two different reasons.

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Now Rebekah knew that the Abrahamic Covenant was to be passed onto Jacob.

Although this honour would normally fall to the elder son, God had clearly told her, "**the elder shall serve the younger.**"

And I am quite sure she would have told her husband and her son Jacob what God's will was.

However, both Jacob and his mother knew that Esau was Isaac's favourite.

And they strongly suspected that when the time came, Isaac would go with the established custom.

And every day reinforced their conviction that Esau was entirely unsuitable for the responsibilities connected with God's Covenant.

Yes, it was painfully apparent that Esau was a worldly man with no regard for spiritual things.

In fact, Hebrews 12:16 describes him as a **"fornicator"** and a **"profane person."**

So making him the custodian of the Abrahamic Covenant would be like casting **"pearls before swine."**

Rebekah knew that, and Jacob knew that, but it looked like Isaac had other ideas.

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No doubt all this was churning around in Jacob's mind when Esau came struggling up to the tent door.

V 29-31 **"And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: 30: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name**

called Edom.

31: And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright."

In any other family, we would be talking about material possessions here.

However, in Isaac's family, there was far more involved than flocks and herds.

The right of the firstborn included both physical and spiritual blessings.

Yes, there was that all-important Abrahamic Covenant, which meant everything to Abraham's descendants.

Although Jacob would have an eye on his father's personal wealth, for he was never averse to financial gain, what he really valued was the material and spiritual blessings contained in the Abrahamic Covenant.

So for the most part, his motives were right.

His real problem was a lack of faith.

Yes, without a doubt, God would have fulfilled His promise in His own good time, and in His own good way.

However, when Jacob saw this opportunity to have it all now, he jumped at the chance.

V 31-34 **"And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.**

32: And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

33: And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34: Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and

**drink, and rose up, and went his way:
thus Esau despised his birthright."**

Concerning garage sales and the like,
someone has said, "One man's junk is
another man's treasure."

Well we're not talking about junk here.

We're talking about the greatest
blessing mankind has ever known.

However, in Esau's opinion, what Jacob
valued above all else was of no use to
him.

Esau was only concerned with earthly things,
the here and now, not some future
spiritual blessings.

He was a natural man, and 1 Corinthians 2:14
tells us that "-- **the natural man
receiveth not the things of the Spirit
of God: for they are foolishness unto**

him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

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V 32-34 "And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

33: And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34: Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

It was a matter of free will.

Indeed, one man's treasure was another man's junk.

So, with a few hasty words, the door of spiritual privilege slammed shut on Esau forever.

