

A Deceiver  
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Genesis 27:18-30

In today's world of intense scrutiny whenever someone comes into the spotlight (especially if they seem to be doing good things) what do the media and their opponents begin to look for? Why is that? What does it say about our expectations for leaders?

We might think back on something stupid we did in our past and say, "*Oh well, there goes my chance to sit on the Supreme Court!*" The Bible is not a story book that ignores the flaws of the people God used in history. To the contrary, scripture shines the light on the failures of the people God used showing them with "warts and all." In this morning's text we read about one of those flawed people God used named Jacob.

"*God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick.*" The great reformer Martin Luther said that. What does it mean? What does it say about God's power over human events? What is the term we use for God's power? How does that apply when wicked, evil people are in positions of power? Today let's focus on US. Why is it an encouraging thought for every saved sinner when we think about our own sinful nature?

The point: Our Heavenly Father has chosen to use flawed humans to carry out His purposes in the world. This is good news for saved sinners who follow Christ! God didn't say, "*Straighten up and I'll be able to use you in my Kingdom.*" Instead, He told us "all have sinned" but when we surrender our lives to Jesus, He can take us just as we are and use us to accomplish His purposes despite our flaws and shortcomings. He can draw a "straight line" with "crooked sticks" like you and me as He did with Jacob.

Some context before the text (actually a lot of it!): God called Abraham to be the father of the nation Israel and supernaturally gave Abraham and Sarah a son named Isaac in their old age. Abraham displayed his own flaws and failings but ultimately his faith in God won out. Last week we saw how God supernaturally chose Rebekah to be Isaac's wife. In Genesis 25 we read that after some struggle with infertility God blessed Isaac and Rebekah with twin boys, Esau and Jacob.

The pregnancy was hard as the two unborn brothers "struggled with each other" in Rebekah's womb (a preview of coming attractions.) She asked the Lord, "Why is this happening to me?" We read in **Genesis 25:23–28 (NLT)** — **23** *And the Lord told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."* **24** *And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins!* **25** *The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau.* **26** *Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob.* [Which in Hebrew means "heel grabber" or "deceiver" – make a note of that!]

The next two verses provide the backdrop of the coming dysfunction in this family:

**27** As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. **28** Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

- Isaac favored Esau the outdoorsman, Rebekah favored the home body Jacob.
- The four players in this family drama each had flaws that fueled the dysfunction.
- Jacob “the deceiver” began to scheme against his barely older brother Esau for first place. Technically, Esau came out first at birth but Jacob (and his mother) were determined to find a “work around” to make Jacob the “top son.”
- Ultimately, God chose the first-born of a family, but He delegated to the father the task of affirming that status with two “rites” the birthright and the blessing.
- The birthright “consisted of special privileges belonging to the first-born male...including a double portion of inheritance.” The blessing, “typically conferred on the eldest son before the father’s death,” was the father asking God to bless the son with “power for success including prosperity and longevity.”
- In chapter 25 we read that when the two boys were about 15 years old Esau came in exhausted from hunting and found Jacob cooking stew.
- In a few verses we see what happens when an idiot meets a deceiver.
- Esau: *“I’m starved, give me some stew!”*
- Jacob: *“Give me your birthright and I will.”*
- Esau: *“What good is a birthright to me now --- it’s yours give me my stew!”*
- Now you see why I called Esau an idiot. He sold his birthright for a bowl of soup.
- Fast forward a few decades. Isaac was blind and about to die and he wanted to do something for his favorite son Esau. He couldn’t override the birthright Esau sold to Jacob but he could still give him his blessing.
- He wanted to celebrate the occasion with a wild game dinner, so he told Esau to go hunting, come back and prepare Isaac’s favorite dish, and receive the blessing. Esau took off to the woods, but Rebekah overheard what was said.
- Rebekah contrived a bizarre scheme to secure the blessing for Jacob.
- *“I’ll cook the food; you dress up like Esau and we will fool your blind daddy.”*
- Jacob said, *“That won’t work! Esau is hairy and smelly and I’m smooth and clean! If daddy gets wise, he’ll curse me instead of blessing me.”*
- Rebekah said, *“I’ll take the curse you put this goat fur on your arms and neck!”*
- Finally, that brings us to verse 18 of Genesis 27:

**(ESV) — 18** So he went in to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” **19** Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.” **20** But Isaac said to his son, “How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?” He answered, “Because the Lord your God granted me success.” **21** Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really

my son Esau or not.” **22** So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” **23** And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands. So he blessed him. **24** He said, “Are you really my son Esau?” He answered, “I am.” **25** Then he said, “Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son’s game and bless you.” So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. **26** Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come near and kiss me, my son.” **27** So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, “See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed! **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!” **30** As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

- Four flawed family members with their own agendas. Let’s look at their flaws.
- First let’s be reminded that God had stated what His plan was for the two brothers back in **25:23: (NLT)** — **23** *And the Lord told her, “The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son.”* It was God’s plan for Jacob to receive the covenant blessing.
- Let’s look at each of the four family members and play a game of “spot the flaws.”
- How were both Isaac and Rebekah flawed as parents?
- Assuming Isaac knew God had declared that the younger son Jacob was to receive the covenant blessing, how did Isaac fail? What were his flaws?
- Rebekah is an easy one, right? What were her flaws?
- Then there was “idiot” Esau. What was his basic flaw?
- Finally, there is Jacob. We can assume his mother told him God had declared he would be in first place yet how did he fail? What were his flaws?
- What overriding flaw were all four guilty of relative to God’s will?
- So, what happened when Esau came back? He begged his father for a blessing, but Isaac said, *“I can’t give you that one but you will be blessed in a different way. You will live by your sword and serve your brother, but you will break free.”*
- The brothers would be enemies; but God had a plan to straighten that out too.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- We said, *“God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick.”*
- How can we apply this to our lives this week? Thoughts?
- The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: **(NLT)** — **26** *Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. **27** Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. **28** God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing*

*what the world considers important. 29 As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26–29)*

- Scripture is filled with flawed people that God used in significant ways.
- Noah got drunk, Moses was a murderer, Rahab was a prostitute, David was a murderer and adulterer, Peter denied Christ, Mary Magdalene was demon possessed, Paul killed Christians; God used them all for His purposes.
- Jacob was a deceiver, but God made him the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Here's the caveat: God can only use flawed people who surrender control of their lives to His will and submit to Him in obedience.
- In a few weeks when we study Genesis 32, we will find that before God could use Jacob in his pivotal role in the birth of the nation of Israel, Jacob would have to surrender and submit in obedience to God's plan.
- Jacob would literally wrestle with God for God's blessing. He got the blessing, but he walked away with a limp for the rest of his life and a new name: "Israel."
- That lifelong limp was given by God forcefully but lovingly as a reminder to Jacob of Who is in charge of every life.
- God gave Jacob a limp; he also gave Paul an unknown physical ailment Paul called his "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from becoming proud.
- Paul said, *"Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."* (2 Co 12:7–9).<sup>i</sup>
- The good news of the gospel is that God loves to draw straight lines with crooked sticks like us! He will take us just as we are and use us to accomplish His purposes despite our flaws and shortcomings if we will only submit by trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- Let's not be discouraged by our flaws and failures. Instead let's ask God to use us despite them just as He has used every "crooked stick" in the history of His plan to forgive our sins and reconcile us to Himself.

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<sup>i</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (2 Co 12:7–9). Tyndale House Publishers.