



... the elder shall serve the younger...

*19 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 Padanaram, 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. 22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire 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. 24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. (Gen 25:19-24)*

*The effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16)* There is much said today about persevering prayer, but I believe the purpose of such prayer goes often unnoticed by the modern church. When we pray the will of God to grant our petitions, we may rest assured that the prayer will be answered to our advantage if we pray from a righteous heart. But we must often go again and again to the Throne of Grace' in certain particular prayers, and they may remain unanswered according to our utterances. Why is this the case? I believe it is because the purpose of a persevering prayer is not made to change the Mind of God (which never changes), but to change the mind of the suppliant. If we pray, and wait for an answer that we do not get in due time, perhaps the LORD wishes us to return on our knees with our spiritual ears open to learn HIS will in the matter that may contrast with our own.

There are a number of important biblical principles to be discerned from this passage:

1. Isaac prayed the will of God in his prayer. He and Abraham had been promised abundant seed, yet Rebekah was barren just as was Sarah at the start. So praying God's will shall always pay dividends.
2. At the grant of God, Rebekah conceived (because God gives conception). This points to the sanctity of life from the moment of conception. Clearly, abortion is murder of the most egregious nature. To savagely murder that innocent child in the mother's womb will result in eternal consequences. God has a plan and purpose for every child conceived in its mother's womb.

3. God knows beforehand the nature of those who to whom He gives conception. He knew Esau's nature, and that of Jacob, before they were born. His prophetic Word was perfectly fulfilled.
4. The struggle of momentous consequences of our lives began before we ever see the light of day. Two nations would descend from the two babes in Rebekah's womb, and they were already at war before birth. The wild and untamed nature of Ishmael has resulted in murders and repugnant, cowardly beheadings of the innocent in our day. Forget not that Mohammad descended from Ishmael! Has he been a giver of peace, or a man of blood and slaughter of innocents? He is perfectly suited as Satan's envoy.
5. The older brother (Esau) did serve the younger (Jacob) after the Lord's foreordained plan. Rebekah prayed the LORD for guidance as to why she experienced the war in her womb. She did not pray for the LORD to assuage the battle but only the reason thereof, so the LORD told Rebekah why it was – thus praying for Light and guidance will always get an answer, and knowing the purpose is efficacious.
6. It is apparent that Rebekah felt the purpose of God, and knew the contrasting natures of the two boys – Esau and Isaac – better than Isaac sensed it. For trifling reasons, Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob. But Rebekah loved Jacob more as did God. It seems that God knew Esau well before he was born, and His great disapproval of him originated from the eternities before Esau was born. This reveals the predestinate purposes of God to be beyond our finding out. *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 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. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* (Romans 9:14-16)

A profound lesson we may learn from the prescient knowledge and calling of God is that we cannot question His will or His way in dealing with men. For example, what right has the clay to dictate to the potter? We are all worthy of death due to our sinful natures. Therefore, God's discretion in choosing to save one, and not another, is not a failure of justice, but an act of discreet mercy just as Romans 9:14-16 clearly elucidates.

We see that there was a division of love between Isaac and Rebekah for the two lads based on imperfect purposes and affections. Isaac preferred Esau simply for the satisfaction of his appetite for venison – not a very reliable yardstick that God would use to determine worth or electability. *And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. 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. And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.* (Gen 25:25-28) Real love is never based on what its object is able to offer the lover, but some mysterious and intrinsic purpose not able to be expressed in words. You may ask, "Can you state your evidence?" I believe it can be readily obvious from that of the love of a mother for a wet, wrinkled, and screaming baby of her own flesh. The baby has done nothing to deserve love, but is loved unconditionally nonetheless. Such love is not based on premonitions of what the baby may become in maturity, for the mother's heart will be irreconcilably broken if the child is taken in death in infancy. The child may die, but the mother's love endures forever for it.

Esau was ruddy and red from birth. He seems to be what society would call 'manly.' Like many men, he loved to hunt and was a "man of the field;" but Jacob was more sedentary in his lifestyle – dwelling in tents. Esau may have been the perfect

forerunner of what we in America call a “red neck.” He was likely boisterous and profane. Such fellows often place greater emphasis on proving themselves in their hunting prowess than in the more important essentials of true and genuine manhood. The number of points on a deer’s horn may be more important to them than the provision they make for their family or the emphasis they place upon eternal matters such as their very souls.

The character of Esau, as with most men, is discovered more in the small points of his behavior than in the more salient and major demonstrations of courageous fortitude. Esau was a strong and fearsome figure to his fellow man, but a disgusting weakling in the eyes of the Lord – Esau was as shallow as he was profane. *And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: 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. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. 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.* (Gen 25:29-34) I have actually heard such vane and frivolous comments made by teammates on the football field. They believe their levity concerning things of dire importance to set them apart as above the level of human struggle. But God sees them in a different light.

Perhaps we all have a streak of Esau in our blood, but there is some unknown quality that may appeal to God. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* (Heb 12:14-17)

Jacob, from before birth, was one who strives for the best – sometimes in unsavory ways; but in God’s eye, a man who strives for the best is always exalted above the spiritually retarded deadbeat. Jacob used cunning and the famished appetite of Esau to get a deal that Esau may have considered a joke, but Jacob was dead serious about that birthright. Jacob later followed the advice of his mother, Rebekah, in his subterfuge to get the blessing of his father in the stead of his brother, Esau. But the great difference between the two was the importance Jacob placed on God’s blessing, and the levity with which Esau viewed that blessing. Esau was careless and mindless of the things of God. He was unstable in the things that mattered most. Jacob, on the other hand, was constant in his pursuit of the blessing, and every other good thing life presented. He never gave up on his hope, or his faith – even to the point of wrestling with God.

Hopefully, we all possess a streak of Jacob, too, in our blood – persistence, hope, striving, steadfastness, and persevering faith!