

JACOB: THE GREAT DECEIVER

Genesis 27

Paul Cedar's story—"What scares me about you is that **you are talented enough that you could pull this off without God.**"

Chinese leader, asked most striking impression regarding the church in the U.S.—"What impresses me most is **how much American Christians have been able to accomplish without God!**"

What scares me about **myself**, and others like me, is how self-sufficient we are—as if we might somehow *"pull it off" without God!*

As a child, I was pretty clever. If I broke something I could get it fixed before mom and dad came home and found out—at least most of the time!

Some of deepest "impressions" come from times I couldn't cover it up.

But such instances were few and far between!

Usually, **I could fix things or manipulate other people to get what I wanted.**

Do you know anyone like that?

When faced with challenging opportunity, we take matters into our hands—use whatever means are at our disposal to work things out for ourselves.

Under pressure, we may flirt with unscrupulous, deceptive practices.

That's the kind of person Jacob was.

He was clever and crafty.

Thanks to that "R" Chromosome, inherited from Rebekah, Jacob could manipulate anyone, get anything he wanted.

—He cleverly outwitted his brother—twice.

—He eventually conquered Laban, getting rich at his expense

31:1 *Laban's sons began to say "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father."*

JACOB IS LISTED AS A HERO OF THE FAITH

Repeatedly mentioned as one of the greats:

(Identified with some great traits:)

* God identifies Himself as the "God of Jacob"

Ps. 46:7, 11; 146:5; Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; Acts 3:13; 7:32, 46

* God calls Jacob: "My Servant" Deut. 9:27; Isa. 41:18; 45:4; Ezek. 20:5; 28:25

* He calls him: "My Chosen" Isa. 41:18; 45:4; Ezek. 20:5

* God is "*Jacob's Possession*" [= *Jacob "inherited God Himself"*] Jer. 10:16; 51:19

* God appeared directly to Jacob Gen. 32:30; Exod. 6:3

* God says: "*I have loved Jacob*" Mal. 1:2; Rom. 9:13

* Jacob on the "guest list" for the kingdom Matt. 8:11; Luk. 13:28

* God makes His covenant with Jacob

Lev. 26:42; Deut. 1:8; 34:4; 2 Ki. 13:23; Mic. 7:20; Heb. 11:9

[Why are all these positive things said about one known as "the schemer"?]

None of this happened to Jacob because he was "the good child."

If there *was* a respectful, submissive, obedient son, it probably would have been Esau!

God didn't choose Jacob because he deserved it!

He was chosen because of God's *grace*!

In spite of scheming, Jacob is listed among the heroes of the faith in Heb 11

Like his father and grandfather, Jacob trusted the God of his fathers

He didn't *deserve* a special relationship with God, God *CHOSE* him! [Rom. 9]

JACOB IS DESCRIBED AS A DECEIVER

"HEEL GRASPER" => heel, footprint

=> vb. follow at the heel => fig. "attack at the heel" "overreach"

=> take advantage of, deceive

=> "THE DECEIVER", THE SCHEMER, THE CHEAT, THE MANIPULATOR

How would YOU like to grow up with that name?

Every day at school, on the playground, the kids call you: "**Hey, schemer! Hey, deceiver! Hey, cheat!**" –*That's what his name meant!*

Gen 25:26 After this, his brother came out, with **his hand grasping Esau's heel**; so he was named **Jacob**. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

27:36 Esau said, "**Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times:** He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" . . .

29:25 When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? **Why have you deceived me?**"

31:20 Moreover, **Jacob deceived Laban** the Aramean by not telling him he was running away.

31:26-27 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? **You've deceived me**, and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war. 27 Why did you run off secretly and **deceive me**? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of tambourines and harps?"

Problem: Is Yahweh the God of a scheming, deceiving cheat?

God chooses Jacob in spite of his character; but *He doesn't leave him that way!*

God transforms Jacob from "deceiver" to "one who overcomes" with God.

Jacob's scheming character is revealed in his relationship with Esau.

FAMILIAL DIVISION 25:19-34

Even in the family of Isaac, the promised son, there is conflict.

Most noteworthy aspect of Isaac's life: rivalry between his sons!

Esau-humanistic attitudes surface–doesn't seek to follow God.

Jacob–seeks God's will, *through deceptive means*; has to learn to trust

God to accomplish His plans, His way–in His own time!

Barrenness cured 19-21

Twins born 22-26

From moment of conception, struggle breaks out between them (22-26).

Jacob owes his supremacy, not to the natural order, nor to his desire and scheming to have it, but to *God's choice!*

He didn't deserve it—that's God's grace!

There is nothing in Jacob that merits special treatment!

God *chose* to love Jacob.

God *chose* to bless him.

Sibling rivalry encouraged 27-28

Esau, as an outdoorsman, attracted special attention of his father;

Jacob, won his mom's favor.

Birthright sold 29-34

Esau demonstrated early in life a lack of appreciation for his spiritual heritage and for his family's relationship to God.

For that reason he was easily deceived by Jacob's scheme and easily convinced to trade his birthright for a meal.

In contrast to Esau's failure to understand the value of his birthright, Jacob understood full well its significance.

This was the basis for their claim to their *spiritual* heritage.

Jacob held that heritage in high regard, though he brazenly schemed to obtain it.

Right view of importance of God's blessing.

Wrong view of how to obtain God's blessing.

Manipulation *NEVER* produces God's blessing and glory!

PATERNAL BLESSING 27:1-28:5

The climax of the rivalry between Esau and Jacob occurs when Rebekah convinces Jacob to deceive his father and steal the blessing.

Jacob's story teaches us practical lessons for our life today:

**WE CREATE PAIN FOR OURSELVES AND OUR FAMILY WHEN WE
SUBSTITUTE OUR PLAN FOR GOD'S PLAN! 27:1-4**

"We have a better idea!

That was Isaac's problem.

At best, he failed to consult God about seeking God's will and blessing his sons.

At worst, he knew God's plan, but liked his better.

Either way, Isaac missed God's plan

and his wife and sons paid for his failure.

Esau's mission 27:1-4

Isaac sends Esau to hunt meat for a meal so that he can bless Esau.

**WE CREATE PAIN FOR OURSELVES AND OUR FAMILY WHEN WE
MANIPULATE AND DECEIVE TO GET OUR WAY 27:5-46**

Rebekah's deception 27:5-26

Rebekah overhears their conversation and plans to deceive her husband and get the blessing for her preferred son.

Jacob was hesitant to go along, not because of moral issues, but because he was afraid of getting caught (11-12)!

He's afraid he'll get a curse, instead of a blessing!

Jacob even hides behind religious words in his attempt to manipulate and deceive (20). *"The Lord your God gave me success!"*

God made a promise.

He could have done it some other way.

His plan included what they would do—this isn't fatalism.

It happened that way because self-willed people took matters into their own hands.

"We can't trust God to handle it in His time."

We have to help Him out!

We want what we want, when WE want it!

God's plan was to bless Jacob—by His grace—in His time.

That wasn't good enough for Rebekah and Jacob.

They had to make it happen! *NOW!*

It appeared to work at first.

We get the impression that manipulating people works—it gets us what we're looking for!

But then the fruit turns bitter.

It doesn't get us what we want.

It never satisfies!

Jacob's blessing 27:27-29

As a result, the family is fragmented—people are hurt.

God has to deal with the consequences of their action.

God has to bring about healing.

Their cause was just—Jacob had a right to it—God had promised it!

They set out to accomplish it by deception—no faith—no love.

They would reap the fruit of hatred and separation.

They never saw each other again!

Esau's lament 27:30-40

When Esau returns with the meal, Isaac is alarmed to learn that he was tricked, but it's too late!

Esau has been repaid for his failure to care about God's will for him.

In spite of his grief and tears, he lost the blessing to which he was entitled as the elder son.

God's plan included this transfer from the beginning.

God wasn't surprised!

It's part of God's plan to bless Israel—*what Jacob did was still wrong!*

He would pay a high price for his scheming!

Eventually, God—*by His grace*—would use it for good!

Esau's threat 27:41-42

Esau plots to get revenge.

Jacob's flight 27:43-46

Rebekah again intervenes with a scheme!

She would recommend that Jacob seek a wife among relatives in

Paddan-Aram—to *avoid the influence of pagan women!*

Jacob ended up empty.

He never saw his mother again.

He left home with nothing but his staff.

That's when God begins to work! When we're on empty!

GOD INTERVENES AND BLESSES JACOB IN SPITE OF HIS MANIPULATION AND DECEPTION, BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE 28:1-5

Ultimately, in spite of his deception and separation, Jacob receives the full Abrahamic blessing God promised—*that's grace!*

DOES JACOB'S STORY REMIND YOU OF ANYONE YOU KNOW?

It does me. —I've been a manipulator all my life.

I've been able to scheme my way around people until I get my way.

Jacob's story is much like mine. (Too much like mine!)

Why are we so slow to learn? How long will it take?

What will God have to bring into *OUR* lives before we realize we can't pull it off by ourselves?

Before we stop trying to control everything and everybody for our own good?

When will we learn to stop scheming and manipulating people to get our way?!!

—to get what I want, when I want it?!!

Tragedy of Jacob's story: Jacob—like us—even though he knew God's plan —thought he had to help God out.

He had to pull this off! Otherwise it might not happen!

God couldn't do it on His Own!

(Have YOU ever felt that way?!!!)

When will we trust God, and let Him work it out —His plan, His way, in His time?!!

GOD'S PEOPLE MUST LEARN TO TRUST GOD TO WORK OUT HIS PLAN, HIS WAY, IN HIS TIME!

That's true whether we're talking about salvation, or life!

(Surely we have to do something, don't we?)