

“God’s Choice Stands!”  
(Genesis 27)

All of us make choices in life. God has given to us a will, and we use it everyday. We choose what time we want to get up in the morning. We choose the clothes we want to wear. We choose what we want for breakfast, where we’ll go and what we’ll do on any given day. We choose the friends we want, the relationships we want to pursue and those we don’t. We even choose those whom we’ll love with a special love and those whom we won’t. We all make all kinds of choices.

But you know the funny thing is that when it comes to God, most Christians don’t want to give Him the right to make these same kinds of choices – not the choice of when He’ll get up or what He’ll eat, because He doesn’t need these things, but the choice of whom He’ll love with a special electing love and whom He will not love in this way, of whom He’ll save and whom He will not save. Dave Hunt recently wrote a book entitled “What Love Is This?” critiquing the Calvinistic view of God’s election. In his estimation, Calvin’s view of predestination gives us a God who isn’t loving at all. Unless God allows all men to choose whether or not they will accept Him, He is not really a loving God. The funny thing is of course that God does give all men that choice, but they all choose to hate Him because of their sin. But Calvin taught – the same thing which the Bible does, by the way – that the love and mercy of God was so great, that though all men hated Him, He was willing to choose to change the hearts of some so that they would love Him and choose Him in Christ. Far from destroying the love of God, Calvinism exalts it to the place where it should be. God’s choice doesn’t destroy His love, it only makes it all the more glorious.

Now why do I bring this up? It’s because we see in our text this evening choices being made. Sadly, we see Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau all making sinful choices. But thankfully, we see the Lord using their choices to bring about His choice which He had purposed in Christ from all eternity: to pass the blessing of the promise onto Jacob. He overrules the bad choices of His people to bring about His good choices. In the middle of their sinful choices, His choice stands.

Let’s begin by looking at the bad choices which the members of God’s covenant people made. The first bad choice we see is Isaac’s – he decided that he was going to pass the blessing of the promise onto Esau, even though the Lord had made it clear that Jacob was to receive the blessing.

Now by this time Isaac was old, and he didn’t know the day of his death, even as each one of us also doesn’t know the day of ours. And so he wanted to get things ready. He wanted to put his house in order and make sure that he passed the blessing onto his heir before he died. It is always a good idea to get things ready for your death, especially since we can’t do so after we die. I think some of us might be afraid to do this because we think it will make us die faster, but of course this isn’t true. We should have our house in order at all times and be ready for the coming of the Lord for us. Now I suppose it’s possible that Isaac didn’t know what the Lord had said to Rebekah about the older son serving the younger, and it’s possible that he might not have known about Esau selling his birthright to Jacob, but it doesn’t seem likely. Rebekah surely wouldn’t have kept that prophecy a secret, especially since she favored Jacob, and Jacob certainly wouldn’t have kept Esau’s sale to him a secret, since if he did, he never would have been able to collect on it. After

all, it was his father Isaac who had to give the blessing. I think Isaac knew who was supposed to inherit the blessing. But for whatever reason, he decided that he was going to give it to Esau. And so he told Esau to go out and hunt for food, to make him his favorite dish, and then he would bless him. We don't know why Isaac wanted Esau to prepare him a meal first. It might have been because Isaac wanted Esau to show him some kindness before he did, or it might have been that Isaac really liked Esau's ability to hunt and especially his game. This might have been the reason why Isaac favored Esau over Jacob. Very often even Christians can favor someone for their natural gifts and abilities, rather than for their spiritual ones. But whatever the reason was, this decision on the part of Isaac was wrong. It was sinful because this wasn't what God wanted – He had clearly chosen Jacob. It was sinful because Esau had already despised it by selling it to Jacob for a bowl of stew. But it was also sinful because Esau had already shown his true nature by marrying two Canaanite women (26:34-35).

The second bad choice we see was Rebekah's: when she overheard what Isaac said to Esau, she decided to block his choice with a maneuver of her own. She told her son Jacob quickly to go to the flock and bring two choice kids so that she could make the savory meal, and he could take it to his father to get the blessing before he could bless Esau. Now Jacob didn't like this idea. After all, if his father discovered that he was really Jacob, he might receive a curse rather than a blessing. Not only this, but there might always be the question in Jacob's mind whether he had really received the blessing at all, since he received it through deception. But Rebekah didn't care. She insisted that Jacob go about it in this way. She even dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes and put goat skins on his neck and arms, so that even if he didn't look or sound like Esau, he might at least smell and feel like him. Now what Rebekah wanted was good – she wanted God's prophecy about her son Jacob to be fulfilled – but the way she went about it was bad. It was deceitful, and for that reason it was sinful.

The third bad choice of course was Jacob's: he decided to listen to his mother and join in her plan to deceive his father. Jacob went and got the kids, and Rebekah prepared them. He allowed his mother to dress him in Esau's clothes and to put the hairy skins on his arms and the back of his neck. And he took the food to his father and lied about who he was and received the blessing. Even good men can often surprise us and themselves by doing things which are wicked. No believer is perfect. Every one of us is still full of the corruption of sin. So let's be careful that we don't get too disappointed when we look for perfection in each other and don't find it. What we should be looking for instead is genuine humility and repentance, since these are how the godly man will respond to his sin.

Lastly, but not surprisingly, we see Esau's bad choice: when he found out about his brother's deception, he didn't chalk it up to his own sin of selling his birthright to his brother or in marrying two pagan women, instead he blamed his brother and wanted to kill him. Now it's true that Jacob shouldn't have gone about it the way he did. What he did was wrong, it was sin, even though Esau was going back on his word and sinning by trying to receive the blessing instead of letting it go to the one he had sold it to. But even so, Esau should not have chosen to hate his brother and want to kill him. This just further showed that he really had no right to the promise or to the blessings of God. His heart was wicked. It had not been renewed by grace. He really wasn't after the spiritual blessings of the promise. He wanted the material ones. The birthright really guaranteed the heir four things: First, it would make him the priest of the family. In those days the true religion

was carried on in households, and so the right of first-born was important. He would become the family's priest. Second, if the person passing the blessing on had a judicial office, it would pass on to his heir – kings passed their office down to their first-born sons. In the case of Isaac, the one receiving his blessing would become the patriarch of the family. Third, the heir would receive a double-portion of the inheritance – twice as much of the possessions. And fourth, and most important, in Isaac's case the heir would have the promise of the Abrahamic covenant passed onto him – not only that the Messiah would come through their line, but that they themselves would in some way become a type or picture of the Messiah, if in nothing else, at least in the fact that they were the first-born. Remember Jesus was made the first-born of all Creation by His Father.

Now Esau really wasn't concerned with blessings one and four. He didn't necessarily want to be a priest or an heir of the covenant or a picture of Christ. He was really interested in having the authority and possessions of blessings two and three. This comes out more clearly in his disappointment over the blessing his father does give him. It indicates not only that Esau and his descendants would have a hard time raising crops, but that he would be his brother's servant. Esau became so angry because of this blessing, that he wanted to kill Jacob. This shouldn't surprise us though, because this is the way of sinners with saints. Unbelievers don't love believers; they hate them, sometimes enough to kill them. Cain killed Abel because his deeds were wicked while his brother's were righteous. The world killed Christ because He testified to their wickedness. Jesus tells us that the world will hate us for the same reason. But thanks be to God, those who are Christ's will love us. Perhaps the only reason Esau didn't kill Jacob right away was because of his affection for his father. He wanted to wait until his father was dead. But that was the Lord's Providential kindness upon Jacob, because it gave Rebekah time to protect her son, by sending him away to her brother Laban, out of Esau's reach. She didn't want to be deprived of both of her sons in one day, which either meant that she thought they would kill each other, or that the one would be killed, while the other would suffer God's vengeance for his crime, even as Cain did.

Now these were the bad choices that were made. The second thing we want to see this evening is how the Lord overruled these sinful choices for His glory.

First and most important, we need to see that no matter what Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob did, His choice still stood: Esau did not receive the blessing, but Jacob did, which is what God intended in the first place. Even though Jacob was involved in deception, he still received the blessing. Sometimes we might wonder how the Lord would have worked this out if Rebekah and Jacob hadn't been deceitful. The answer is really quite simple. The only thing that was necessary was for Isaac to give the blessing to Jacob. Isaac could have repented on his own and done so. Or Rebekah and Jacob could have confronted Isaac with the prophecy and the fact that Esau had already sold his birthright to Jacob. If under these circumstances Isaac still disobeyed, then the Lord wouldn't have honored his blessing and would have passed on his promise to Jacob anyway. This is just speculation, of course. The Lord had actually ordained that it would take place just as it did, so it couldn't have happened any other way. But He had also ordained that He would overrule these sinful choices to His glory. God is able to work good things out of bad decisions, or in other words, He is able to use even evil for His good purposes. This is really the only reason that God allows evil to exist: it's so that the Lord can show the glory of His wisdom in using evil to bring about good things. Our Lord actually used the sin of Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob to bring the blessing of the promise to Jacob. He overruled evil for

good. Jacob now was the one through whom the Messiah was going to come. Jacob now was a picture of Jesus Christ, the first-born of all Creation, in that he was given the right of the first-born. This is the most important thing to see: the Lord used their sin to bring about His good purposes. His choice stood.

But secondly, the Lord also used these events in the lives of Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob to further sanctify them and to further show them His glory. There is an indication in our passage that when Isaac tried to circumvent God's will and failed, he finally submitted to God's plan. When he realized that he had blessed his younger son, he said, "Yes, and he shall be blessed" (v. 33). It's possible that he could have renounced his blessing on Jacob and given it to Esau, but he didn't. He realized that he was wrong in trying to bless Esau in the first place. God's prophecy had come true anyway, and he submitted to it. When we try to go against what we believe is God's will, or try to bring it about in the wrong way and fail, it reassures us that God will work His will no matter what we do. Of course, we should never even try. When King Nebuchadnezzar knowingly gave himself the honor for building Babylon, although he knew it was really the Lord's honor, and was disciplined for it, he said, "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" (Dan. 4:35). He tried to take the credit, but God received it anyway. We should always fight against our sins, against the things we know are wrong, so that in Christ's strength, we can do what's right. But often, when we aren't faithful, we need to be thankful that the Lord overrules our sins and still works His will through them.

And though we don't read about it, we can be certain that Rebekah and Jacob also learned a lesson on how not to accomplish God's will through sinful means. Although we don't read that Esau held any grudges against his mother, he certainly did against Jacob, which is something Jacob would now have to wrestle with for many years to come and something which would further sanctify him. When you are going through a trial, when things aren't going very well, that is when you will be much more apt to call upon the Lord and to seek Him with all your heart. Those are also the times when you will grow more in the grace of God. I think we all like it better when things are going well. But we also would admit that when they are, we are much more apt to fall into sin. Trials purify our faith, and they strengthen our walk with Christ. The Lord could have used Jacob's lie in this way to further sanctify him, since he might have wondered for some time to come whether or not he had forfeited it through his lie. But the Lord removed that doubt when his father repented and ratified that promise by saying that Jacob, according to God's promise, would be blessed. The Lord can also use our doubt about receiving His blessings to sanctify us.

People of God, the Lord our God made all His choices in eternity, and His choices will always stand. They will continue to stand no matter what bad choices we might make. The Lord said, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Rom. 9:13; Mal. 1:2-3). That was one of His choices and it stood, no matter what Isaac tried to do in giving the blessing to Esau. From this let's learn to trust the Lord more and ourselves less. If He has chosen us through Jesus Christ – and we can know that He has if we are trusting in Jesus tonight – He will bring us to heaven, even if we do sometimes make sinful choices. And the Lord will continue to work His will in and through our lives, even when we do sometimes fail Him. We can't destroy His plan. His will will be done. Amen.