

Series: Gleanings in Genesis
“Control and Consequences”

Scripture text: Genesis 27

August 24, 2025– 8:15 & 11:00 am Services
Faith Presbyterian Church, Tacoma, WA
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Isaac and Esau

Gen. 27:1 When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.”² He said, “Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death.”³ Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me,⁴ and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”

Rebekah lures Jacob

Gen. 27:5 Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it,⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “I heard your father speak to your brother Esau,⁷ ‘Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the LORD before I die.’⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you.⁹ Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves.¹⁰ And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.”¹¹ But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man.¹² Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing.”¹³ His mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me.”

Gen. 27:14 So he went and took them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved.¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.¹⁶ And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.¹⁷ And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

Gen. 27:18 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.

Gen. 27:26 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!”

Gen. 27:30 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.³¹ He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, “Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that you may bless me.”³² His father Isaac said to him, “Who are you?” He answered, “I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.”³³ Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, “Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.”³⁴ As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me, even me also, O my father!”³⁵ But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing.”³⁶ Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” Then he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”³⁷ Isaac answered and said to Esau, “Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?”³⁸ Esau said to his father, “Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.” And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

Gen. 27:39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him:
 “Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be,
 and away from the dew of heaven on high.
 40 By your sword you shall live,
 and you shall serve your brother;
 but when you grow restless
 you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

Gen. 27:41 Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”⁴² But the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son and said to him, “Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you.⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran⁴⁴ and stay with him a while, until your brother’s fury turns away—⁴⁵ until your brother’s anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?”

Gen. 27:46 Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I loathe my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women like these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. [Is. 40:8]

Let’s pray together.

Introduction:

We have before us some of the most over-the-top family dysfunctions you’ll ever see. It is like a scene out of a soap opera— only this is real. There is deception, betrayal, theft, and a plot to murder. There are even close calls, dramatic weeping, and wardrobe changes.

Each character adds to the scandal of this text, and each seeks to control the outcome of these events in a particular direction for some reason.

For all four believed they knew what was best. And because of that, they did whatever it took to secure their desired outcome. In fact, so great was their conviction that it seemed that they were operating under the idea that “anything goes,” because “*the ends justify the means.*”

But as we will see here, though they *thought* they were in the right, we see that their actions were quite sinful, and that those actions led to difficult consequences.

And so today we will be looking at the **futility of our control, the consequences of control and the freedom in God’s control.**

I. The Futility of Our Control

First let’s look at the futility of the control in this passage.

And while there are four people who are all tied up in this unbelievable struggle for *control*, I’d like to draw our attention mostly to the two parents: **Isaac and Rebekah.**

Let’s highlight those moments briefly:

A. Isaac’s Attempt to Control

The first thing we notice is that Isaac had decided that Esau would be the preferred and blessed child. We can infer that perhaps it was because he was his firstborn, a hunter who was skilled at his trade, and because he was a good cook. Esau was a man’s man.

And the text shows us that Isaac brought Esau to himself in order to bless him. Isaac explains that it is because he fears he will die soon. (Interestingly, Isaac did not die for nearly another

forty years.) Whether this was an attempt to secure the blessing for Esau while he still had control of his body, due to his growing blindness and other possible illnesses, we do not know.

But in any case, it appears that Isaac is trying to establish control over the situation and give Esau the promises and inheritance before it was in fact time for him to die. Perhaps it was because Isaac saw in Esau someone who could protect the family since Isaac was going blind.

We are not certain, but most commentators also think that Isaac knew that Rebekah had been told by God that Jacob was the chosen one who was to rule over his older brother. It seems unlikely that Isaac would not know this.

At the same time, given the cultural context and the lack of respect given to women especially in that time period, it is possible that Isaac chose to disregard Rebekah's words, perhaps because he felt that if this had been from God, he would have received the same vision or answer from God, himself. Whatever the case, Isaac had decided to bless Esau despite his disobedience and marrying of pagan women and had decided to do it in what might have been a somewhat private setting.

That was Isaac.

B. Rebekah Attempt to Control

Rebekah, on the other hand, had received God's promise that Jacob would rule over his brother. She loved Jacob, maybe because of this very reason.

So, when she learned that her husband was about to bless Esau—the one son she found undesirable for so many reasons, who made her life bitter with his several pagan wives, she knew that she had to take charge of the situation.

We can imagine her justifying her deception, saying something to the effect that reasoning with Isaac was just not going to go anywhere. Perhaps she even considered him a stubborn and proud man and disrespected him for his preference for Esau. Whatever the case, the fact that Rebekah did not approach Isaac to challenge this idea likely shows us that she believed that he would not be willing to listen to her. That he would be unreasonable. And so, she quickly took control of the situation.

Rebekah saw that something irreversible was about to happen and she took matters into her own hands. She ordered Jacob, "***obey my voice as I command you***". There was no time to argue. She required his obedience, even demanded it, while offering to take the consequences and curses upon herself if anything went wrong. So sure of herself and what needed to be done, she did whatever it took to secure her wishes.

After all, the Lord had told her that Jacob was to receive the promise. And yet at the same time, she was not willing to wait on the Lord's timing.

In both Isaac and Rebekah, we see a divided couple seeking control who are actively seeking to control and manipulate the situation and secure their purposes for their chosen son.

While Isaac's actions are not commendable, Rebecca's appeared far worse. She not only went completely against her husband's intentions, but developed a deceptive plan filled with wardrobe changes, trickery, betrayal, and manipulation. Likely emboldened by the fact that she felt like God was on her side, she acted in devious ways to accomplish God's plan.

And Rebekah decided to do what she believed was right. And she succeeded. ***But at what cost?***

II. The Consequences of Control

A. Personal Consequences

This chapter doesn't give us a clear judgment on the consequences of these actions, but in contrasting this account with the life of David, we can see two different approaches.

While David is directly confirmed by Samuel the prophet that he is to be king of Israel in front of all his siblings, David refuses to take any action against Saul until the Lord has given him the throne in his perfect timing.

David had many different opportunities to take the throne by force, but he waited on the Lord's timing and God blessed him for it.

In contrast, we see that Rebekah seized the opportunity and had no issue sinning in order to get the job done.

In essence, what she did was that she disobeyed God.....in order to obey God.

She sinned, in order to do God's will. But God does not call us to sin in order to accomplish his will. He calls us to live righteously.

And we notice that God does not bless Rebekah's efforts. In fact, it seems to get worse.

In fact, Rebekah is not mentioned again after this chapter. We do not even learn about her death. We just read later that she was buried.

And the real sadness is that Rebekah is almost immediately separated from her beloved son Jacob, because of this deception. He has to leave for Haran so that he will not be murdered by Esau. Rebekah is never said to see Jacob's face again.

Some assumptions which we could probably grant – are that Isaac probably knew that Rebekah had orchestrated this scandalous betrayal. There is no doubt in my mind that this would have increased the tension and problems in the family by a significant factor amount.

The betrayal Isaac and Esau would have felt against Rebekah would have made their family a complete mess.

It's true that Rebekah got her way but lost everything. She had not waited on the Lord, and paid the price.

B. Broader consequences

In the early 2000s, a small church in Seattle really took off and started having great success. The small church became a megachurch with multiple campuses by the mid-2000s.

At its largest point, it had about 15,000 people attending weekly services spread out over 15 different locations.

Much of the success was seen as the result of very strong and charismatic and "visionary leader". Since the church was successful (numerically speaking), many people, including the media, assumed that the church was doing something right.

One author notes that we often evaluate ministries and leaders based on the size of their church, and "we can be incentivized to excuse the flaws of those who seem to be producing church growth." He also noted that "people often equate **results** with righteousness or effectiveness."¹

For sure, the church was growing and multiplying. Everyone wanted to be a part of the new and fresh movement.

But then, along with the success of this church, reports started surfacing that alleged that the senior pastor was acting in ungodly ways. He was found to be yelling at people, manipulating and controlling them in aggressive ways. Dozens of people came forward alleging that the pastor had created a toxic and abusive culture where staff and congregants were silenced if they disagreed with him. After an internal investigation and pressure from outside, the pastor resigned. After 15 years of tremendous growth, the church closed its doors.

This church and this pastor demonstrate that doing the "*right thing*" ***the wrong way, ends up being the longer path.*** The ends don't justify the means.

And what we see here and throughout Scripture, is that when we follow God's ways, he requires obedience not only ***in our calling***, but also ***in our obedience to his other commands.***

Jesus never calls us to do something that would require us to sin, to be abusive or to be controlling for his purposes prevail. He is fully able to accomplish his will without sin.

So, we learn that doing God's work means it must be carried out according to God's way. And we also learn that when we rely on God's control, there is freedom.

So far, we've seen what happens when we try to control our circumstances: families fall apart, ministries collapse, and lives are torn apart. But if we know this is true, then why do we keep doing it? Why do we keep trying to steer that way, when we know it will only cause us harm? The answer lies in the root of control.

¹ <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/enduring-lessons-from-the-rise-and-fall-of-mars-hill/>

III. The Freedom in God's Control

What is at the root of control?

In the book of James, we learn that we are all tempted when we are lured by our own desires. And when we focus on some desire that we want badly, often times that desire grows stronger. It goes from being something that we would *like to have* to being something that *we believe we must have*. It goes from a *desire* to a *demand*.

And we have different expectations that we often demand of others without realizing it. Demands that if they are not met, really get under our skin.

And those demands are often revealed in the secret of our hearts and minds. In the places where we make promises to ourselves.

I believe that almost everyone has what can be known as “inner vows” or “inner demands.” These are promises we make to ourselves beneath the surface, usually as a response to fear or pain.

“I will never be ignored” or “I will never be controlled” or maybe yours is different, but the point is we all have some version of these.

You can usually identify yours by paying attention to when you get unusually angry, anxious, or hopeless. Someone cut you off, ignores you, or questions you, and suddenly you are reacting in a way that is much more intense than normal. Why? Probably because it hit one of those inner vows.

How many teens have made silent vows like this: “*As soon as I become an adult, no one is ever going to treat me like a kid again.*” And as they grow up and mature, that vow makes it difficult for them to interact in healthy ways with authority.

Perhaps your inner vow is focused on respect: “*I will never be disrespected.*”

- Competence: “I will not be seen as incompetent”
- Control: “I will have things under control in order to feel safe”
- Autonomy: “I will never be bound from making my own choices”
- Security: “I will never put myself in an unsafe situation”
- Approval: “I must be seen as likeable, capable and successful”
- Perfection: “I will not be seen as a failure or a fool”
- Significance: “I will not be ignored by others”

And these hidden vows, when they become these absolute requirements, can create anxiety, anger or controlling behavior.

Suddenly, we go from just feeling uncomfortable to feeling unsafe and now the only possible response is to micromanage everyone else in order to make things as secure as they need to be.

The person who, in their core, has decided that they must be treated respectfully, will lose their tempers and demand respect if it is not given as they want.

The one who requires that things must be on time will become extremely controlling of others to make sure that doesn't happen again. The person who ties their value to their likeability and approval, will become highly anxious when they face conflict.

When these demands are violated – anger, anxiety or controlling behavior arise.

These are some of the reasons that we end up reacting like Rebekah and Isaac and seek to be in charge of our lives. We want to avoid those uncomfortable moments, for good.

See, at the root of these demands is something deep. Some fear. Some unfulfilled desire. And we make inner vows to ourselves like, “I must be safe...I must stay in control.” Like Rebekah and Isaac, we react to our fears and needs by reacting in our own strength, because we struggle to believe that God will give us what we need.

So, when our desires become demands, and those demands turn into inner vows, we begin to find ourselves burdened. So, we get angry, anxious, and controlling—just like Rebekah and Isaac—because we are trying to carry a yoke that God never asked us to carry.

And the truth is, the reason we feel so stressed when life is out of control is **because it is out of our control. It always has been.** The good news is, it's not out of God's control. That's where our freedom in Christ comes in.

God is in Control

A couple of weeks ago, we talked about the fact that God rules all things in heaven and on earth. We said that if there is “one single molecule in this universe running around loose, totally free of God's sovereignty, then we have no guarantee that a single promise of God will ever be fulfilled.” [Sproul, *Chosen by God*]

And the passage showed us that we have nothing to be worried about. For God is sovereign and he orders all things according to his wisdom. No power is greater.... All things are under God's rule.”²

And that means that we have incredible freedom.

We don't need to sustain the universe, or control the blessing, or prevent things from falling apart.

This is in many ways **perhaps the most comforting aspect of this passage. Our lives, our families, our work, our health and our very being, are not under our control. They are all under God's control. And his plan will always prevail.** No matter how badly we butcher things. God will be with us.

² <https://www.faihtacom.org/gleanings-in-genesis-gutierrez/not-by-works-the-mystery-of-gods-choosing-genesis-2521-18-and-romans-910b-16>

And when **we find ourselves in** a situation that is causing tremendous stress and **feels out of our control**, we need to remember that that is because it is. Because **God is the better Controller**. He's sovereign, compassionate, and faithful even when we're a mess.

See the good news is that the Bible doesn't just show us our sinful tendency to want to be in control. It tells us that we don't need to be. It reminds us that in Christ all of our needs are met – past-present and future.

So, instead of doing our best to manage everything, Jesus says,

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” [Mt. 11:28-30]

See, Jesus doesn't call you to work harder. He calls you to rest in him.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this morning we see that even though Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob fail to trust and rest in God, God remains faithful to them.

Though Jacob and Rebekah stole the inheritance and she offered to be cursed in Jacob's stead, if necessary, we see that Jesus secured the blessing for us by truth and obedience and in fact became our curse and death so that we might life.

And through all these things, God reminds us that while we fail and often make a mess of our lives, rather than turning to control, we can rest and trust in what Jesus has done.

For Jesus accomplished what Isaac and Rebekah could not and what we could not. Jesus is greater than Rebekah. Greater than our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And in his great compassion and mercy, He has secured our eternal inheritance through **his** own sacrifice and blood. Amen.

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