

Chapter VII

LESSONS FROM THE LIVES OF JACOB AND ESAU

In the introduction to this book we recognized the truth that the Bible is God's revelation to man of His unfolding drama of redemption. It is permissible then, as we have seen, to liken each character we meet in Scripture to actors in a play. Some have leading roles in this drama, and others provide the supporting cast; but all, in some measure, support the theme of the redemption of man either positively or negatively.

We have seen Isaac presented, in four chapters in Genesis, in a fourfold manner as a type of Christ: in his birth; in his sacrifice on mount Moriah; in his coming alive again from the mount; and in the selection of his bride. In sharp contrast, after his marriage to Rebekah, only three verses of Scripture are used to describe the nearly twenty years from his marriage to the time of Rebekah's pregnancy. In this period of time Isaac is no longer seen as a type of Christ, but simply as a believer who has been saved by God's grace and who abides in this world.

And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife,

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because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. (Genesis 25:19-21)

We then find Rebekah pregnant in answer to Isaac's prayer, but everything is not normal in her pregnancy: *the children struggled together within her*. She was perplexed about this and inquired of the Lord: *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* (Genesis 25:23).

This disclosure fits perfectly into God's unfolding drama of redemption. The two *manner of people* within her womb would continue to portray the struggle between the world and the believer in God's revelation of the redemption of man. Thus we are born into this world as children of Adam, who are *of the earth, earthy*. Then, through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ become children of God and are justified freely by God's grace; but this manifestation of God's grace upon sinners does not set well with the self-righteous of this world. They believe they should have an inheritance with God by right of their births and by right of their conduct.

Rebekah undoubtedly shared the answer to her inquiry of the Lord with Isaac. Together they must have pondered just what these words, *two manner of people* and *the elder shall serve the younger*, could mean. *And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like an 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* (Genesis 25:24-26). Thus the struggle that had caused Rebekah's inquiry of the Lord was openly manifested at their

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births, when Jacob's *hand took hold on Esau's heel*.

This struggle, which began in the womb, has continued long after the deaths of Esau and Jacob. To anyone who has *ears to hear and eyes to see*, the struggle between Esau and Jacob is evident in the affairs of the Middle East. It plays out daily on television, in our newspapers and other media sources: which report constant wars and acts of terrorism. These are a constant reminder to those with spiritual perception that *the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would* (Galatians 5:17).

When man tries to evaluate the Middle East situation, he has a tendency to say, the Jews are the source of the problem. He sees them as interlopers, who, by a 1947 United Nations mandate, took the land from the Arabs. It is imperative for man, with his natural mind, to think this way. Otherwise he would have to recognize the existence of the God of the Bible; the covenant relationship between God and Abraham; the same covenant confirmed to Isaac; and again confirmed to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. If he allows that the Jews have a legitimate claim to the land of Israel (which name was changed to Palestine by the Romans, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.), then he must allow for the authority of the Scriptures. This is something mankind, as a whole, is not willing to do.

After the births of Esau and Jacob the next event recorded in the Bible is the sale of Esau's birthright, which occurred when Jacob and Esau were adults, not boys as is supposed by many Sunday School publishing houses:

And the boys grew [to make large, i.e.: to grow to adulthood]: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And

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Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. 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 lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright. (Genesis 25:27-34)

This description of Esau and Jacob and the details of the sale of the birthright tells us a great deal about the spiritual character of each of them. The Scriptures tell us Esau was a *cunning hunter*, which means he was skillful in catching his prey by stealth and he was *a man of the field*. This suggests he was a man of the world. Thus Esau is a representative of the flesh. Conversely the Scriptures describe *Jacob as a plain man, dwelling in tents*. The term *plain man* connotes the wrong image to most of us. The literal meaning of the Hebrew conveys the idea that a *plain man* was one who was pious. This means Jacob had some interests in spiritual things, which is not necessarily evident in the Scripture's account of his life. Even so Jacob is representative of the spiritual man and this agrees with his position of being second-born. If we contrast the descriptions of Esau and Jacob with that of Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ, we find an interesting comparison:

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (I Corinthians 15:45-49)

Esau was called Edom because of the incident in which he sold his birthright, and Adam was called Adam because God formed him of the red earth. Thus the first man and Esau, the

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firstborn, are both called *Red* because the Bible speaks of them as being of the *earth, earthy*. Jacob's position of being the second-born, as previously stated, speaks of that which has been born again. Therefore the apostle Paul wrote: *Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual* (I Corinthians 15:46).

Esau and Jacob clearly fit the Biblical description of that which is first and that which is second. As we learn more of Jacob, we may have a tendency to want to reject him as a type of the spiritual man because Jacob leaned so heavily upon the flesh, but we must not succumb to this tendency. To *rightly divide the Word of Truth*, we must take what God says as opposed to what we think, because *man looks on the outward, but God looks on the heart*. The view of Jacob as a spiritual man is by God's grace, through the imputed righteousness of Christ.

As we continue with our view of Jacob, we find he was *a plain man dwelling in tents*. The Bible places a good deal of importance upon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelling in tents:

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10, emphasis mine)

Tent-dwelling is seen to be a declaration of faith on the part of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is a declaration of their faith in the promise of eternal life. They believed they would live in the presence of God forever. Thus the tent is representative of the fact that they saw this earth as a temporary dwelling place and, indeed, it is.

In the life of Jacob, as in the lives of Abraham and Isaac, we shall see, once again, that the spiritual man does not always behave spiritually. Jacob was plagued by a fleshly nature, but he

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also had a spiritual nature. Consequently there was a constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit in his life, just as there is in the life of every believer in Jesus Christ.

When Jacob *stole* the birthright from Esau, it is reasonable to assume, Jacob had some knowledge of his mother's inquiry of the Lord and of the promise, *the elder shall serve the younger*. God promised Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, and his father, Isaac, that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through their Seed. From Rebekah's inquiry it was evident that God's promise would be kept through Jacob, but Jacob did not rest in God's promise. Rather he found a fleshly means of extorting the birthright from Esau.

It is this terrible dependence upon the flesh, which is revealed in all of the characters we have viewed, that plagues all believers. The identification of the flesh in them is for our benefit. Not so we can feel superior, but that we might learn from them. The many examples of their dependence upon the flesh shows us how easy it is to succumb to the flesh, rather than to depend upon the Spirit of God through the promises in the Word of God.

One of the marvelous things about the revelation of the flesh within believers like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is that it shows us we are not lost or rejected of God because it is there. It is simply a part of our human nature, which remains active in the believer until he is resurrected and glorified. Since the benefits of believing God and living by faith are so much better than those problems that arise because of unbelief, it seems silly that we should be so dependent upon the flesh. Yet this dependence is overwhelming evidence of the strength and subtleness of the flesh and of the fact that we are still subject to it.

Many times the believer operates in the energy of the flesh, while thinking he is operating

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spiritually. He does this because he has been taught to do so from the pulpit. The ministry from the pulpit has not taught the believer to operate in the overt or knowledge of the evil side of the flesh, but in the knowledge of the good side. The ministry from the pulpit has taught the believer to seek to gain favor with God by self-effort. Thus the believer has often been taught that his moral life is the basis for blessings from God. The truth is, every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies is the believer's because of the grace of God.

There is nothing wrong with a pure lifestyle, if it is born out of the love of Christ, but if it is born out of the observance of fleshly codes of *touch not, taste not, and handle not*, it is of the flesh and shows itself as self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is one of the most insidious manifestations of the flesh within the believer, because it thrives on finding fault with others and it is unable to perceive its own faults. Sadly, self-righteousness is often perceived by the uninstructed as being a manifestation of holiness, but it is not. Thus our Lord asked, *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother? Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye* (Matthew 7:4).

The Jews, like all of us, had to understand their human nature in order to come into a right relationship with the Lord. Even so they were ignorant of God's righteousness; and they sought various methods to establish their own righteousness, apparently not realizing self-righteousness is a stench in God's nostrils. This prompted Isaiah to write: *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy [menstrual] rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away* (Isaiah 64:6).

The narrative tell us when Esau came from the field he was hungry. This is quite

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understandable to all of us, for our appetite for food is, over time, very necessary to sustain our lives. There was nothing intrinsically wrong with Esau's expression of hunger. It was the degree of importance he placed upon satisfying his hunger that is key to understanding him. At that moment, he placed the satisfaction of his appetite above everything else. Our Lord said, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (Matthew 4:4).

As we continue with the account of Esau and Jacob in Scripture, we will find Esau had many characteristics which were naturally attractive, but none of them were pleasing to God. Esau was a man's man, a hunter, who provided venison for his father and thereby comforted him. Yet in the area in which he could have pleased God, Esau was bankrupt. He lived his life void of faith, apparently not realizing, *without faith it is impossible to please [God]*.

With our natural minds we perceive no evil in Esau's actions, but Esau's actions were born entirely of his fleshly appetite, which was void of any spiritual perception. On the other hand Jacob seized the opportunity to gain the birthright for himself, but he did it by fleshly means. He may have known the birthright was to be his according to God's promise; but instead of waiting on the Lord to deliver it in due time, Jacob exerted fleshly pressure on Esau, when he said, *Sell me this day thy birthright*.

Esau submitted to this pressure for a few beans and bread. This is evidence that he despised his birthright. The birthright represented fellowship with God, because God created Adam in His image for fellowship. So, by right of creation, man had a birthright to fellowship with God, but that right was lost through Adam's sin. Despite the loss of the birthright by Adam,

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it is restored by faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, giving those who are born-again the right to fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

It was after the sale of the birthright that Isaac took his family towards Egypt to escape the famine in the land. He heeded the warning of God not to go into Egypt and so they dwelt in Gerar. By this time Esau and Jacob were old enough not to be recognized as the children of Rebekah, because she was presented to Abimelech, the king of Gerar, as the sister of Isaac. Even so it did not take long for Abimelech to recognize Rebekah to be Isaac's wife and demand that they leave Gerar. It was then that they moved to Beersheba: *And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah* (Genesis 26:34-35).

The Hittites were an idolatrous people. This was undoubtedly the reason Esau's interest in Judith and Bashemath were *a grief of mind* to his parents. His interest in these women provide us with a greater profile of the character of Esau: he was not concerned with his birthright, which typified fellowship with God, nor with the false beliefs of his wives. He was *of the earth, earthy* and put no stock in anything of a genuine spiritual nature. This evoked God to say, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated* (Romans 9:13).

Isaac was one hundred years old when Esau married Judith and Bashemath. Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau and Esau's wives lived together in Beersheeba for thirty-seven years after Esau's marriages to the Hittites. Then, when Isaac was one hundred and thirty-seven years old, he called Esau to his side: *And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the*

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field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die (Genesis 27:2-4).

Previously we suggested Rebekah must have told Isaac what the Lord had revealed to her, when she inquired of the Lord. It would be strange if she had not. Despite the probability of this, it appears this made little difference to Isaac. He loved Esau and he intended to bless him, instead of Jacob. The source of his intentions was certainly not the prophecy of God but his love for Esau and the venison he provided. It was this insignificant fleshly pleasure which motivated him to rebel against the prophecy of God in the interests of Esau.

Isaac told Esau to hunt for venison and prepare it the way he liked it. Then he promised to bless Esau before his death. These instructions and promised blessing are akin to Abraham's cry, *O that Ishmael might live before thee!* This is the cry of the flesh, which desires its will above God's will. Isaac repeated Abraham's sin, rather than learning from it. Even so Rebekah overheard Isaac's conversation with Esau. She ran and told Jacob of his father's plan, rather than resting in the fact that God had promised, *the elder shall serve the younger*. She should have realized that God always keeps His promises. He cannot lie.

The thought of the promise did not cross Rebekah's mind: she had a plan of her own. She told Jacob to fetch two kids of the goats and dress them and bring them to her. Rebekah cooked the kids in a manner which simulated the venison which Isaac so dearly loved. Rebekah told Jacob to put on Esau's clothing because, at Isaac's advanced age, he was nearly blind. Even so Jacob was afraid of being caught, but Rebekah met Jacob's fears with cunning detail. She told Jacob to put skins upon the nape of his neck and upon his hands and arms to simulate the hairiness of his

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brother.

Finally everything was ready. The meal was prepared. It was time for Jacob's presentation:

And he came unto his father: and he said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, and my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. (Genesis 27:18-30, emphasis mine)

Any thoughts Jacob had of effecting his mother's scheme without having to blatantly lie were soon dispelled. First, he answered his father, *I am Esau thy firstborn*. Second, in response to how he had found it so quickly, Jacob had to involve God in his duplicity and said, *Because the Lord thy God brought it to me*.

Many people gravely misunderstand what it means to use the name of the Lord in vain. Church members are appalled at the use of the Lord's name as a swear word, and rightly so. But these same people think nothing of attaching the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to acts as notorious

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as that of Jacob's, or worse. In this category there are vast numbers of professing Christians who claim they can do all of the miracles our Lord did. Even so the hospitals and cemeteries remain full, and I have yet to see one of them walking on water. It seems as though the most preposterous lies are told for *the glory of God*, and no one in these groups seems to be the least bit upset with all of the lies.

There is no such thing as a little compromise respecting the truth of the Word of God. Have you ever thought about the fact that it is an impossibility to tell one lie? I don't think it can be done. One lie leads to another lie in order to give the first lie some kind of credibility. The worst kind of lies are those which affect man's relationship with God. These are the lies of the false prophets, who speak with feigned words.

Of course all people have lied, or will lie in one capacity or another at sometime in their lives. Jacob lied by claiming to be Esau. Then, to be convincing, Jacob wore Esau's clothes and put skins on his hands and the nape of his neck. He presented his father with a kid of the goats, instead of venison. Then he said he had found the venison quickly because the Lord God had brought it to him. When Jacob was confronted with whether he really was Esau (because Isaac recognized his voice), Jacob reaffirmed his first lie and said, *I am*, to the query, *Art thou my very son, Esau?*

In the deception of Isaac a great spiritual truth is revealed. Isaac recognized Jacob's voice, but what he heard did not convince him he was Jacob. Rather he sought to confirm what he heard by what he felt and smelled. If Isaac had trusted what he heard, rather than what he felt, he would not have been deceived. In the Bible we are told, *Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the*

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Word of God. Consequently in our relationship with the Lord, the Word of God is the final authority and must not fall to our natural feelings.

Further the deception of Isaac was aided by his rebellion against the Word of God. God had told Rebekah, *The elder shall serve the younger.* Yet Isaac pronounced the blessing upon the elder, over the younger, not knowing that he was actually blessing the younger, but his intent was to bless Esau. By Isaac's intent, the *blessing of Esau* placed him in direct violation to the revealed will of God. At that point in time, Isaac's love for Esau took precedence over his relationship with God. Perhaps this is the reason our Lord said, *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke 14:26).

In light of the commandment to honor your father and mother, obviously, our Lord was not advocating a genuine hatred of father, mother, sisters, and brothers. Rather the Lord was drawing a comparison between heavenly and earthly relationships. It is a matter of loyalty. Our relationship to the Lord and to His Word must take precedence over all earthly, or fleshly relationships. By comparison our love for God ought to make all other relationships appear to be hatred.

Isaac failed the test of the disciple on that occasion, on that day. Yet this is the same Isaac who went to the mount with his father Abraham and willingly allowed himself to be bound to the wood upon the altar. Isaac's desire to bless Esau in opposition to the Word of God portrays the believer who is dependent upon the flesh. Yet Isaac's submission to Abraham, as a willing sacrifice, portrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. How perplexing the life of a believer can be. At one

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moment the believer can show marvelous faith in God, and the next moment he can be disgraced in the degradation of the flesh.

When Esau came in from the field, he prepared the venison he had taken in the hunt and went unto his father and said to him, *Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.* Isaac asked who it was that stood before him and he answered, *I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.* Then *Isaac trembled very exceedingly and said, Who?* because the realization of what he had attempted to do must have overflowed him with waves of guilt and shame. He had sought to bless Esau, because he was his favorite son, but had inadvertently blessed Jacob, which was the will of the Lord according to the prophecy spoken to Rebekah. After those initial moments of guilt and shame, Isaac quickly responded to the will of the Lord and said to Esau, *I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him, and he shall be blessed.* Then Esau lamented with a bitter cry when he realized that his blessing was lost.

There are many Esaus in this world who shall lament one day for their rejection of the truth of the Word of God. They have lived their lives for themselves and have given little, if any thought to the truth of the Word of God. They have the attitude that if there is a heaven to gain, it shall be their's because they are good people; and if there is an inheritance, it shall be their's because of their natural births. The Esaus of this world are more concerned for their appetites, which are displayed in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, than they are for their souls. Thus the birthright and the blessing remain lost to the Esaus of this world because they will not receive them by faith.

This perplexes those who view mankind according to *a way which seemeth right unto a*

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man. Esau appears to have been more righteous than Jacob. He looked after his father in his old age, endeavoring to please him with the venison he so dearly loved, but we must not be deceived: ... *for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*. Esau must be viewed through the eyes of God, and this view is not at all like man's view:

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 [the blessing] carefully with tears. (Hebrews 12:15-17)

Contrary to common belief Biblical repentance is not sorrow, though Godly sorrow can produce repentance. Biblical repentance is a change of mind, usually towards God. Esau was sorry he lost his inheritance and this produced many tears, but he never changed his mind. His tears reflected self-pity, not repentance; so he remained adamant in his belief that the blessing should have been his because of his birth and because of his life. Esau was not willing to recognize the total insufficiency of his birth, nor of his efforts to gain the blessing by providing venison for his father: to sway him from the pre-known will of God. Thus he can be compared to those Jews who said to John the Baptist and to the Lord, *We be Abraham's seed*. Indeed they were Abraham's seed after the flesh, but not after the Spirit.

Throughout the history of Israel, there have been those Jews who expected all of the spiritual blessings promised to Abraham to be their's simply because they were of the natural lineage of Abraham. They failed to recognize God made promises to Abraham which were to be fulfilled in his natural lineage and others in his spiritual lineage.

The words of Esau's threat to kill Jacob were told to Rebekah (Genesis 27:42). Once

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again, she devised a plan. She spoke to Isaac and proposed the idea of sending Jacob to the city of Haran to obtain a wife of her kindred. Her plan would serve two purposes: it would protect Jacob, and it would provide him with a suitable wife of their kin, not like the wives of Esau, who had been a grief of mind to both Rebekah and Isaac. Isaac agreed with the plan, apparently, not knowing of the death threat to Jacob; and as Abraham had done so many years before, he desired to obtain a wife for his son of their kin in Haran. Rebekah's second plan reveals she had completely lost sight of the fact that *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither a son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* (Numbers 23:19)

When a believer is in the flesh, for the most part, he does not consider the things of the Spirit. She did not consider the promise given her in her pregnancy. Rather she trusted in her own ability to protect her beloved son. This tendency to trust the flesh rather than the Spirit is the principle which we have seen repeated throughout the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the principle of the believer trying to protect God's interest by fleshly means. The believer's responsibility is to trust the Lord, rather than to react in the flesh. Thus Rebekah's scheme to send Jacob to Haran was born of the flesh:

Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day? And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me? (Genesis 27:42b-46)

Rebekah urged Jacob to go to Haran to preserve his life, and she convinced Isaac that her

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interest in having Jacob go to Haran was for the purpose of obtaining a wife. Unaware of the duplicity, and with proper motivation *Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother* (Genesis 28:1-2).

In these events Rebekah and Isaac present an interesting contrast. They were in agreement with the concept of finding a proper wife for their son. The selection of a proper wife, who was not an idolater, was a spiritually sound idea. Isaac's motivation for sending Jacob to Padan-aram was born out of a spiritual consideration to select a proper bride for his son. Rebekah's motivation was born out of her interest to protect her son from the threat of death. The threat of death was the result of Rebekah's fleshly scheme to deceive Isaac. Even though Isaac and Rebekah were in agreement about a spiritually sound plan, Isaac was operating in the Spirit and Rebekah was operating in the flesh.

This incident teaches us it is possible for two believers to be in agreement with, and actively engaged in, an activity which of itself is spiritual. One believer is governed by faith and the other is governed by the flesh. What makes the one believer's activity of faith and the other believer's activity of the flesh? It is their motivation. The apostle Paul wrote:

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. (Philippians 1:14-18)

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It is possible to be engaged in a spiritual activity, such as the preaching of the gospel and the salvation of souls, for the wrong reason. Paul has shown us that there were those who preached the gospel, hoping to add affliction to him in his imprisonment. They certainly were not motivated by the Spirit of God to do this. They had to be motivated by the flesh. Even so Paul rejoiced in the preaching of the gospel, because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Motivation, then, is a key factor in whether an activity is of the flesh, or whether it is of the Spirit. Despite this, there is a tendency, especially by church people, to judge a man by the company he keeps. One who associates with whores and drunks is often accused of being a whoremonger and a drunkard. Such associations are not judged to be spiritual associations, no matter the activity, or the motivation, because man has a tendency to look on the outward and not on the heart.

This is the reason the religious Jews accused the Lord Jesus of being a whoremonger and a drunkard. All of our Lord's activities were of the Spirit of God, because Jesus said, *I do always those things which the Father showeth me*. It should be apparent, then, that motivation cannot, necessarily, be judged by outward appearance. Our Lord said, *... as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*. The methods of our Lord should be our methods, despite man, who *looketh on the outward appearance*.

Believers in Jesus Christ should be discerning. They should be engaged in those activities which the Lord called them to do, without concern for what man thinks of them when they do them. The believer also needs to look carefully at the many so-called spiritual activities, which they are called upon by man to do, because these activities may be of the flesh and not of the

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Spirit.

At the urging of his mother and with the blessing of his father, Jacob departed for Haran to seek a wife. Rebekah perceived the separation to be but a short time, until the anger of Esau could abate; but as we noted earlier, the anger of Esau has not abated unto this present day. The return of Jacob to the land is still not tolerated by the descendants of Esau.

Despite her hopes, Jacob never returned to Beersheba in Rebekah's lifetime. In fact, Jacob never saw his mother again. Fleshly schemes have a way of causing us to suffer in the flesh. The Bible says, *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Rebekah sowed to the flesh, and her fleshly sowing caused her to be separated from her beloved son for the rest of her natural life. Even though the child of God has all of his sins forgiven because of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, this does not necessarily alter the law of sowing and reaping. The consequences of sowing to the flesh can and often do remain throughout the lifetime of the believer.

The law of sowing and reaping is especially evident in the relationship between Jacob and Esau and the nations which they founded (Israel and Edom). Jacob fled from the presence of Esau for fear of his life. He went to Haran, where he married Leah and Rachel and their maids Bilhah and Zilpah. Jacob fathered eleven sons and one daughter during the twenty years that he lived in Haran.

Then Jacob left Haran and began his trek back to Beersheba. As he neared Esau's land, Jacob feared that Esau might still try to kill him. Even though Esau never carried out his death threat against Jacob, the nation which Esau fathered was and still is the continual enemy of the

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Jews, the children of Jacob (Israel). Jacob's flight from Canaan to Haran, to avoid the death threat, did not change Jacob's character. He was a man of faith, and he was a man of the flesh. There were times when Jacob believed God, and there were times when he trusted his own natural abilities. In the light of this he still represents the redeemed man; so that Jacob's life is a spiritual object lesson to all who are believers in Jesus Christ.