



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

Faith and the flesh!

Genesis 25:1-34

Message #26 of 50 – S926

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Sunday Morning Service

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Faith and the flesh!

Genesis 25:1-34

Opening Comments

- Good morning – turn to **Genesis 25**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- I don't know about you, but I was saddened and deeply disappointed by what I saw take place in our nation's capital this week
- We regularly remind you to pray for our nation
- We are at a crossroad and if this week was any indication, we have turned the wrong way
- This nation needs to find Jesus
- This is not a matter of politics – liberals versus conservatives – Republicans versus Democrats – right versus left
- It is a spiritual matter – it is a spiritual battle
- One that I believe that we, the church of Jesus Christ needs to get better at fighting
- And to do that on a national level, we need first to do it on a personal level – in our own heart
- Within today's text, we have a practical example of this battle
- Let's pray for our nation and then get into our text
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Faith and the flesh!**
- Before we get to the topic at hand, this chapter has a couple of other things first
- First, Abraham's part in God's plan of redemption comes to a close
- Then, Ishmael pops briefly into view and then fades from the scene
- Finally, the birth of the first twins recorded in the Bible; Esau and Jacob
- It is in these twins where we will see the cosmic struggle that rages all around us and within us
- **Genesis 25:1-4**

- Abraham was 137 when Sarah, his ‘princess’ wife of 100 years died
- After an unknown amount of time, he marries again
- Keturah = perfumed or spice
- She gives him six sons and they have sons
- Most of them we know nothing about
- The descendants of Midian become enemies of Israel
- Sheba and Dedan are mentioned in the prophecy of the Gog/Magog war in Ezekiel 38
- These sons were Abraham’s biological descendants, but they were not heirs to the promises of God
- So, Abraham does something very wise
- **Genesis 25:5-6**
- Abraham makes it clear that Isaac is his only heir
- Sends the others away just as he did with Ishmael
- Then Abraham’s story ends
- **Genesis 25:7-11**
- Abraham lived for 175 years – 100 years in the land God called him to
- ‘good old age’ – ‘full’ – translators inserted the words ‘of years’
- ‘full’ = from (saw-bay) = satiated, satisfied
- Sense is that Abraham looked back on his life and was satisfied that it was a good life
- The text then shifts back briefly to Ishmael
- **Genesis 25:12-18**
- In Genesis 17 God promised Abraham that He would bless Ishmael with multiple descendants, including twelve princes
- Many of the Arab nations descended from Ishmael.
- The spiritual darkness of Islam also came from the descendants of Ishmael.
- To this day some of Israel’s bitterest enemies are descended from Ishmael.
- Then the attention shifts to Isaac and his family
- **Genesis 25:19-20**
- We saw that beautiful account of faith and God’s providence in the chapter 24
- Isaac was about forty when he married Rebekah

- He was the one through whom the promises of God would flow by his descendants
- There was just one problem – after 20 years Rebekah still wasn't pregnant
- **Genesis 25:21**
- We can only imagine how hard that must have been for them
- Isaac had been promised by God that he would be the father of a multitude of nations
- Rebekah had the sense that she was to be the vehicle for the fulfillment of that promise
- The blessing of her family when she left **Genesis 24:60**
And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: "Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them."
- Isaac doesn't repeat the mistake of his parents – Hagar – Ishmael
- Instead, he pleads with the Lord – he prays for his wife
- The sense is that he has been praying about this for a long time
- Why hadn't God answered their prayers earlier?
- After all, we know it was God's will that Rebekah bear children to Isaac – He promised it to them **R. Kent Hughes**
"God was teaching His people that the promised blessing through the chosen seed of Abraham could not be accomplished by mere human effort."
- The fulfillment of God's promises can only come through God's sovereign power – not by human effort
- At last Rebekah is pregnant – the joy is quickly replaced with concern
- **Genesis 25:22-23**
- This is the first mention of twins in the Bible
- We will see shortly that they are not identical twins – couldn't have been more different
- Two nations – two peoples – describes a separation – division
- God also declares that they will break the natural cultural order
- The 'older shall serve the younger'
- Inside Rebekah's womb a struggle was taking place – a war was waging between these two boys
- It must have a great relief when it came time to deliver them
- **Genesis 25:24-26**

- Right out of the womb Esau and Jacob were radically different from each other
- Esau – hairy – more like an animal than a man
- Jacob – grasping at the heel of Esau – a schemer
- **Genesis 25:27-28**
- Choosing favorites – probably not the best parenting style
- Then the nature of these young men is revealed in a strange incident
- **Genesis 25:29-31**
- Esau comes in from a hunting trip – probably unsuccessful
- Tired and hungry – asks his brother for some food
- Jacob sees an opportunity to take advantage of his weakened brother
- ‘Sell me your birthright’ – firstborn son = special privileges – double inheritance – after father passes – authority over family, including Jacob
- Back in verse 23 – ‘the older shall serve the younger’ – that is what is implied – somehow the younger, Jacob, will obtain the birthright that naturally would go to Esau
- Jacob is trying to manipulate Esau to get what God promised
- There is no way that would work, right? Not for a bowl of stew
- **Genesis 25:32-34**
- Esau was not concerned about the future – he saw only his need – his desire
- Esau is a picture of unredeemed humanity
- Without Christ need, desire, ambition is all there is
- Jacob’s behavior in this account is not praiseworthy
- He believed God’s promise that he would assume the place of authority in the family
- May have even understood that the great promises of God to his father and grandfather would flow through him
- Jacob believed God but still acted in a way that was like his brother Esau
- The Bible teaches that all believers are like Jacob to some degree
- They all believe God but sometimes they act like Esau – responding selfishly, or in a self-centered way
- And as we grow spiritually, we become more aware of this truth

- We become aware of a struggle within us

- Paul understood this struggle **Romans 7:23-25**

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

- And then James said **James 4:1**

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

- As Jacob and Esau struggled in Rebekah's womb they represented the two natures in every true believer

- Paul described them for us **Galatians 5:16-17**

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

- The flesh is the Esau nature that does what it does because that is what is natural

- The Spirit is the Jacob nature that believes God and seeks to please him

- In our account for today, Jacob sought to please God by doing what was natural

- No one will ever please God by doing what their flesh leads them to do **John 4:24**

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

- Nothing done in the flesh is pleasing to God

- What happened this week in Washington, DC was a work of the flesh

- I started this message saying this is not political problem – it is spiritual

- What we saw last week was the flesh attacking a spiritual problem

- So, what do we do about it?

- First – **God's Promises**

- Do you know what God has promised? Isaac knew God had promised him children to carry forward the promises

- Our nation may be on the brink – what has God said about believers in their nation **2 Chronicles 7:14**

...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

- God can heal our land – He can heal this nation, this state

- Second – **Our Prayers**
- Isaac pleaded with God to keep His promises
- Can you say that your prayers have sounded like pleading **James 5:16b**

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

- Fervent = passionate intensity
- Finally – **Christ-like Living**
- Jesus walked on this earth as a man – flesh and blood
- He walked in the Spirit His whole life – flesh submitted to the Spirit
- He did it perfectly – we haven't – we won't – do better
- How much better – just better
- Make a mistake, repent, and try again
- The only hope this nation has is if God's people walk in the Spirit and pray like the future of this nation depends on God hearing their prayers
- I love this country – let's all do our part to save it
- **Pray!**