



The Parish of Peasedown St John

Genesis 25:19-34 - Why should we pray?

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – Genesis 25:19-34

19 This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

21 Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. 22 The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

23 The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

24 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb.

25 The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. 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 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. 30 He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)

31 Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

32 "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

33 But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- How is family life working out for you at the moment?
- Family life had clearly been tough for Isaac and Rebekah's family:
 - Isaac got married late on his life: *'Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah'* (Genesis 25:20)
 - Rebekah was unable to give birth for twenty years and her pregnancy was clearly not without its problems.
 - The twins, Esau and Jacob, were born when Isaac was 60: *'Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.'* (Genesis 25:26)
 - The twins were very different from one another. They not only looked

different but their personalities were very different too.

- Esau had red hair and was a 'hairy' man. *The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau.* (Genesis 25:25) He was a robust outdoorsman and a skilled hunter: *Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country* (Genesis 25:27). He clearly acts on impulse selling his birthright for a bowl of soup.
- Jacob on the other hand was a 'home boy': *'Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents'* (Genesis 25:27) and is clearly jealous of his brother's preeminent position in the family.
- Isaac favours Esau whereas Rebekah favours Jacob: *'Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.'* (Genesis 25:28)
- Every family has its challenges. What is interesting and informative is what problems Isaac and Rebekah bring to God in prayer and which problems they don't.
- As we look around our own families what are the issues we are currently lifting to God in prayer and what might be those issues that God is challenging us to lift to Him in prayer?

2.2. What Isaac and Rebekah do pray about

- The biggest problem in Isaac and Rebekah's marriage was a lack of children. We read *'Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless.'* (Genesis 25:21) It is interesting to note here that Isaac prays on Rebekah's behalf. Maybe after many years of prayer Rebekah has given up all hope of ever having children whereas Isaac keeps on praying and holding onto God's promise to his father Abraham: *'I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.'* (Genesis 17:6) Isaac prays in alignment with God's will.
- Are there certain things that we have given up praying about because they never seem to happen. Maybe we need to learn from Isaac and trust God's promises and to pray those promises in.
- It took twenty years of prayer before Rebekah finally falls pregnant. Isaac is sixty and Rebekah is probably in her mid thirties. We now see Rebekah calling out to God during a difficult pregnancy: *'The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.'* (Genesis 25:22)
- Rebekah prays to God no doubt fearing for her pregnancy. After all it had taken twenty years to get this point. She brings her pregnancy and her health before God. Are we willing to do the same thing? Do we trust God with our health and well being.
- God answers her prayer by telling her that she will give birth to twins and then reveals to her what the future holds for the twins inside her: *The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."* (Genesis 25:23).

2.3 What Isaac and Rebekah do not pray about

- Rebekah receives a word of knowledge from God, just as much as we can receive similar words from God today. What is interesting is what Rebekah does with this knowledge. Unfortunately, probably because of a lack of faith on her part, she runs ahead of God. She favours Jacob: *'Rebekah loved Jacob'* (Genesis 25:28) and in Genesis Chapter 27 she actively helps Jacob steal his brother Esau's birthright: *'Rebekah said to her son Jacob, Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, "Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die." Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: "Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. "Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.* (Genesis 27:6-9)
- We get a sense that Rebekah prays for Jacob but probably not for Esau. Likewise with Isaac we get a sense that he prays for Esau and not for Jacob: *'Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau,'* (Genesis 25:28).
- Favouritism in families is always toxic and potentially leads to all sorts of problems. Do we favour certain members of our family over others? When praying for our family do we pray for each member equally?
- If favouritism hadn't blinded them then Isaac and Rebekah should probably have been praying together for both twins. Praying that God would deal with Jacob's jealousy and rivalry and for Esau's impulsive behaviour and lack of faith and understanding of his position in the family and the value of his birthright.

2.4 Conclusion

- Every family has its problem and issues. Isaac and Rebekah are no different from every family down the ages. Hopefully our prayer life will be challenged by their story:
 - a) Will we be persistent in prayer holding onto those promises God has made?
 - b) Are our prayers in alignment with God's will?
 - c) Will we bring before God our health and well being?
 - d) Will we trust God's timing and not run ahead of God?
 - e) Will we pray equally for every member of our family rather than favoured few?

3. Questions to consider at home

- 3.1 What do we learn about family life from this passage?
- 3.2 How does Isaac pray in alignment with God's will? How might we follow his example?
- 3.3 What are some of the promises God has made to us that we can pray into?
- 3.4 How does Rebekah run ahead of God's timing? How do we?
- 3.5 Who in your family is God calling you to pray for?