Disobedience, Disharmony & Death

**Read:** Genesis 25:22-27

**Text:** Hosea 12:2-3 “The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

**Introduction:** Many preachers, including myself, have preached about Jacob and recounted his deceptiveness. We have focused on the mean-ing of his name and the fact that when he had his encounter with God; God changed his name to Israel. Jacob and Esau had become bitter enemies because of Jacob’s actions and a struggle continued for years among the descendants of these two brothers. In the book of Obadiah we read of God’s promised judgment against Esau’s descendants. All of Esau’s were destroyed in judgment.

**I. God gave Isaac & Rebecca a promise.** “…Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels …” The promise of God is a guarantee of a longer life for their sons in a day where infant mortality was a common issue. His promise also means that their sons would be a success. They are promised sons who will survive to manhood and become productive citizens of the world.

**II. God gave Isaac & Rebecca an order to obey.** He tells them of a plan that will go against the norm for their culture. He commands that the elder son (by a second or two) shall serve the younger. Jacob was to receive the birthright and the blessing as ordered by God. How do you think this story would have read if Isaac and Rebecca had sat down with their sons, when they were small, and told them what God had commanded? What if they had been raised with the knowledge that Jacob was to be the leader? There would have been no need for Jacob to deceive his brother and/or his father. There would have been no need for Rebecca to favor Jacob and Isaac to favor Esau. It was Isaac’s refusal to obey God that caused the rift and war between his sons and subsequently between the nations of Edom and Israel.

**III. God provided a visible sign of His command.** If there was any doubt about the order that God had given it should have been erased when Jacob was born holding on to Esau’s heel. The picture here (from Jacob’s perspective) is of one son who is pushing the other out of the way. From Esau’s perspective it is of his brother trying to hold him back. Perhaps, from God’s perspective we find a different idea completely. I think that God was trying to get them to visualize the leadership of brotherhood that shows Jacob holding his brother up as he demonstrates leadership. Good leadership does not dominate or control but actually supports those under its control. It is telling that when God wants to develop a leader He, many times, has them spend part of their lives as a shepherd. Joseph was a shepherd before he was a slave. David was a shepherd before he slew Goliath. Jacob was a shepherd before he became Israel. Amos was a shepherd.

Shepherds lead their sheep. Butchers must drive them.

**IV. Another story with a different outcome** is found in the life of the next generation. Jacob had 12 sons; the first three fell by their disobed-ience from inheriting the birthright the next 7 were excluded by their father who picked Joseph to receive the birthright. In I Chronicles 5:2 we read: “For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler; but the birthright *was* Joseph's:” Since we are not aware of exactly when this decision was made it is possible that it was made after Jacob became aware of what his brothers had done to him.

After a life of faithfulness to God and his family and after his for-giveness of his brothers how could any of them be ungrateful as to resent Joseph’s birthright blessing? Each of his brothers died with the gift of forgiveness and loving their brother.

**Conclude:** It is not unusual for God to lead us to do things differently than what we would expect. Naaman was angered when he was commanded to go wash in the dirty Jordan river. He wanted to wash in a better river until his servants convinced him to obey the man of God. Baalam decided to give the king of Moab more information than God allowed and it cost him his life. Uzziah tried to take on priesthood responsibilities and became a leper. Moses struck a rock that he was commanded to speak to. Obedience brings blessing and life; dis-obedience brings disharmony and death.