

9242

ISAAC, WE BRETHERN, AS ISAAC WAS, ARE CHILDREN OF PROMISE

Speaker: Bro. J. Cowie

Study #6: By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau

Reading: Genesis 27

Thanks brother Andrew, my beloved brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ and our very dear young people.

We're going to see a lot of perspiration on the brow this evening, a lot of heart palpitations and quivering limbs. It's that kind of chapter, and it's going to draw together for us all the principles that we've seen in the last week or so of our studies around the life of Isaac. All of those principles concerning a nourishing Father for whom nothing is too hard. It mattered not to Yahweh, b&s and young people, that Isaac harboured a problem in his life for 57 years. As great as that man was, like you and me, he clung tenaciously to a position that was quite clearly wrong. It impacted his marriage, it didn't destroy it, but it certainly affected it, and it probably would have gone with him to the grave, if a nourishing Father had not have brought him up against a brick wall. But Isaac was a quality man, he recognized the hand of his God in his life, and when he saw it, he humbled himself and accepted the rebuke absolutely; not before his limbs had quivered and his heart pumped harder than ever before. We're going to see this man brought to perfection, if I might use that word, in terms of his character, as perfect as an ordinary man can be. It's the work of a nourishing Father because nothing is too hard for Him! We're going to see, as a result of that work, b&s and young people, a Father and son at last, working together completely as one, to build the divine family, as Isaac finally calls Jacob into his presence to bless him by faith, as the apostle Paul says in Hebrews 11 and verse 20, he sends him away to complete the work which his father had given him to do, to build up God's family.

We're going to see the principles of marriage reiterated, those fundamentals of marriage that were drawn to our attention in Genesis 24; the mental, moral, physical aspects of marriage will be there without necessarily having to be pointed out. We're going to see a contest between flesh and spirit, we're going to observe the pain of the wrestling of a conscience in a very difficult situation. That was our subject you'll recall last Friday evening. We're going to see the hand of divine providence working in the life of the patriarchs and overarching all of those things which have been the source of our discussions here this week. We're going to go back and have a look at where we started. We began, b&s and young people, by emphasizing the importance of building up our own personal relationship with God. And do you know, that if we accept that Jacob was in Haran for 40 years (and I do) if we accept that, 40 years after the events of Genesis 27, when Jacob had not seen his father or his mother for that length of time,

under pressure by Laban, the thing that was etched upon his mind about Isaac his father was this, that Isaac was a man of God with an enormous sensitivity to the reality of God in his life! You know that? that's what was etched upon the mind of Jacob. You come with me to Genesis chapter 31.

Here he is escaping from Laban to return to his home. And we read in the record of Genesis chapter 31 and verse 42, as he upbraids Laban for maltreating him for so long and points out that if it had not been for the intervention of Yahweh in his life, that he would have been taken down to his socks by this man, the inveterate deceiver, the Syrian, the son of Bethuel. And he says in verse 42, 'Except the God of my father,(and look what he now says) the Elohim of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight'. And that's emphasized again by the Spirit itself; have a look at verse 53, 'The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor', says Laban, 'the God of their father, judge betwixt us', then Jacob says, 'And Jacob swear by the fear of his father Isaac'. So, the commentary of the Spirit upon what was happening there is that when it came time for Jacob and Laban to make an oath, Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac; that word 'fear' happens to mean 'dread' (6343), but it's not in that sense in which Isaac feared his God, it was, b&s and young people, that he had a very real sensitivity to the reality of God in his life, so that everything that he did, was measured by that reality. I put it to you, that most of us here tonight have great difficulty in sustaining that sensitivity. Is that true, or is it not true? I believe that the distractions of this world, and the evils which it pumps out at us day after day have created a situation where, in the hustle and bustle of life, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we find it extremely difficult to maintain, on a daily basis, that kind of sensitivity.

But it's not impossible! and it has this great benefit, b&s and young people, and I know some who do maintain this kind of sensitivity, and I stand in awe of them. I often kick myself, I kick myself, because I can't seem to keep it up consistently like I would love to do, because I found this, and I'm sure you've found it too, that when you know your mind is locked in to the mind of God, when you know that there is a recognition of the reality of God in what you do and what you choose to do, there is a sense of satisfaction and a peace of mind in that which passes all understanding. It would be lovely, wouldn't it, if we could maintain that? but we need to work at that. There will be many of us here at the bottom end of the ladder, and we need to begin climbing that, and you'll only ever do that by applying your mind to spiritual things, and turning your back upon those things that are corrupting, and which can only impact negatively upon where your mind ought to be. Surely, young people, that's the purpose of these studies together; why bring some fellow from Brisbane down here, and put him on a platform to yell himself hoarse for a week, if we're not going to take at least something away from our exercises together! Surely, if we come, (and it does in fact come), to a youth conference or any other major activity in our lives, it ought to be some kind of milestone in our experience. And if only one thing sticks, and if only one resolution is made and kept in measure, if only a few can say that they have benefited permanently from what has been done, then the exercise is worthwhile, isn't it? But as I said in one of our studies, that outcome

is entirely in our individual hands. No one can do that for you, we must do it for ourselves! So we're going to see the fear of Isaac emerging from this chapter, Genesis 27.

But I think it might be wise, first of all, to go to the apostle Paul's words from whence our title has been taken, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 20, just to lay a foundation. Now the wonderful thing about any consideration about Genesis 27 in contra distinction to our consideration of Genesis 26 is, at least, this chapter is well known. So, all one really needs to do is to paint some graphic pictures and the lessons commend themselves. It makes my task very easy. The story is there, it's taught in Sunday School and we know it almost backwards, in fact, it's been the subject of studies from this place in bygone years. In Hebrews 11 and verse 20 we read this, (now you think about this, of all the wonderful things that we've seen in the life of Isaac, which would you have chosen as the mark, the hallmark of his faith? I don't think many of us would have chosen the events of Genesis 27 and the first few verses of Genesis 28, but that's where Yahweh says that the faith of Isaac was revealed), it says in verse 20, 'By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come', and we tend to slip over these words, the last few words of that verse are critical. It says, 'concerning things to come' and, obviously, the context of Hebrews chapter 11 is not about temporal or present things; it's about eternal issues, issues of destiny, life and death. And things to come, of course, while they might also have relevance to a man like Esau who didn't have any prospect of the future, primarily refers to those things that have to do with the attainment of the promises in the last day. We just need to keep that tucked away in the back of our minds when we come to consider Genesis 27. So, there is the demonstration of faith in the life of Isaac, 'he blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come'.

So, we can come back now and begin to make some progress in this chapter. We find an old man, sickly, unable to see, probably because of his affliction at the time, lying prostrate in his bed. I guess if I was to ask you how old do you think he was there would be some varying answers to that. We know from elsewhere that Isaac lived to 180 years, 5 years longer than Abraham. Well, the events of this chapter occurred when he was 117 years of age, he had 63 years of life to run, that's if you accept that Jacob was in Haran for 40 years. If you accept that he was only there for 20, (and that can be debated) then Isaac was 137 years old, he still had a considerable amount of life to run. You know, perhaps it might be best pointed out at this stage, because this chapter is about the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, which was a wonderful marriage and which was finally repaired, I believe, in these events; repaired from that baggage which was hanging there, and had been there for 57 years. You know, b&s and young people, it is a salutary fact that of all the patriarchs, Isaac is the only one who ever had only one wife. There is no record of Isaac ever marrying anybody else but Rebekah; there is no record of him taking a concubine, and the word 'concubine' in the Hebrew means 'soft' from the idea of 'pleasure' (6370) and that's why men usually took concubines. Nothing like that in the life of Isaac, he only ever had one wife which is highly relevant to the type, to the allegory of Isaac as the son of God, who only ever had one bride!

And so we come to this scene, can you get the picture in your mind? They'd been living in tents for a long time and they're still living in tents; so we have the tent of Isaac in which this old man lies, unable to see, thinking that because his sickness at that time was terribly severe, that he was about to die (he didn't know that he had 63 years to go)! There's the tent of Rebekah next door, there's the tent of Jacob not far distant, and probably somewhere near the camp far enough away so that Esau could do his own thing without any interruptions, there was the tent of Esau. He was rarely ever there, but when he was, well, he just basically went his own way. He was close enough, however, for his wives to be a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. They were dunderheads, oh, they might have been intelligent, they might have been extremely sharp, but they were Hittites, they were women of the land in whose head there was not one stearic of spirituality, nothing that could be appealed to, because that was the kind of woman, of course, that Esau liked; they were empty-heads! And every day as Rebekah looked over and had to deal with those women, her heart was heavy, as was the heart of Isaac, that their son was so foolish; and yet, b&s and young people, this is the sad part about it, after having 50 odd years of revelation of what his son was really like, having seen his choice of wives, having had to deal with them, Isaac still cherished a notion that Esau was the rightful firstborn of the family! And this had been a sore point between Rebekah and Isaac since those boys had been born!

You know (just go back briefly to Genesis 25 and verse 23) that the answer came back to Rebekah when she enquired of Yahweh, that Yahweh said unto her, 'Two nations are in thy womb and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels, and the one people, (Jacob, or Israel) shall be stronger than the other people (Edom, or Esau), and the elder shall serve the younger'. Now, of course, it's preposterous to suggest that Isaac never heard those words. Rebekah would have gone to him and said, 'I went to Yahweh and enquired of Him and this is the answer: Esau is not the rightful firstborn, Jacob is', and Isaac, whether he said anything or not, harboured the notion for the 57 years that Esau was the rightful firstborn of the family. And because he thought he was near death, the time had come for him to pass on the blessing of the firstborn. And so he calls in verse 1 for his son, in Genesis 27, the record says, 'it came to pass when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim', (which of course, speaks to us; the eye being a symbol of intelligence, it's telling us something about his spiritual intelligence, it had been dimmed by his blind spot concerning his son. Look what he says), 'He called Esau his eldest son, and he said unto him, my son'; now the word in the Hebrew is 'ben' and as we know 'ben' means 'a family builder', my family builder. Now that's the issue here, isn't it? Who was going to be the family builder of the family of Isaac? That had been established way back in Genesis 25 when God had declared to Rebekah that 'the elder would serve the younger', and yet Isaac had never accepted that, and it had been a burning issue, a running sore in their marriage for so long, and we read in the record of Genesis 25 and again here in Genesis 27 that 'Isaac loved Esau his son, while Rebekah loved Jacob'. Isaac loved his son because Esau was everything that Isaac was not! Have you ever seen this, have you ever seen, brethren and sisters who have an unbelievable blind spot when it comes to their own children? Well, I'll tell you something, I've seen it, I've seen it in myself! It's just native to our flesh to want to protect our own, and I have seen some people destroy their children because of their blind spot. And

when you go to them to try and help sometimes you get drawn and quartered! 'How dare you say anything like that about my children', 'my boy would never do anything like that!' Why do we react like that, b&s? I know, and I think you know, human pride, that's why, because our children are a reflection of ourselves, or they may be, as in the case of Esau, something that we never could be!

You've got Esau, this sportsman, he's terrific at cricket or football. He can leap high walls, he can do slam dunks 9 foot 6 above the ground! Dad couldn't do that! THAT'S MY BOY! and you know, that is so common a problem that it is rarely seen for what it is! It's sad, isn't it? that one of the greatest men to ever grace this earth, who was just an ordinary man like you and me, had a similar problem, and it impacted upon his marriage because this was a subject that Isaac and Rebekah couldn't talk about. They spoke about everything else, they obviously had the same intentions for their children, they wanted the best for them; but when it came to who was the rightful firstborn, who was the spiritual boy, who ought to be given the blessing, etc., they could not agree! and they kept apart on that issue. You see, it says in verse 5, 'That when Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son': but she didn't go into Isaac and say, 'now listen here, my lord, this is a serious issue which has now come to a head and I've got to speak my mind again; you can't bless Esau, you should throw him out!' That's what Sarah did in the case of Ishmael, and God said, 'you know, Abraham, she's right!'; and if Rebekah had done that on this occasion God would have said, 'Isaac, she's right!' And Isaac comes to that acknowledgement in this chapter, SHE WAS RIGHT! But she doesn't do that, b&s and young people, she doesn't go into Isaac, she works another way, because she knew the deep bitterness that this caused in their relationship.

Ah, you can put these things in the background, you can put them into the no-talking area of a marriage; you know how it's possible to maintain a relationship (which sometimes happens in ecclesias too, and by the way, b&s and young people, you want to carefully observe family life, carefully observe it, because you are seeing a cameo of ecclesial life), and if you want to resolve any problem in the ecclesia, I suggest that you apply the divine principles that ought to be applied in the home. It's only when we get it right in the home that the ecclesia is going to function properly, because it's just a larger family, that's all it is. Instead of having 3 or 4 children at home around your table, you simply take your 3 or 4 children and your spouse to the meeting, and there are other families like that, and the family's just bigger that's all, and the home you're in is the ecclesial hall! You don't find it absolutely remarkable that when problems strike ecclesial life, very often, we will be the exact opposite to what we would do in the home. It's strange, very strange and yet the apostle Paul is always talking about 'he that leads his family well' has the qualifications to lead in the ecclesia. He's always saying that, and yet we sort of just put that aside sometimes when it's politically convenient perhaps so to do. I did say to you that I wasn't going to duck around issues, and these issues are in this chapter. There was a problem in this home, a problem in the marriage, no talking on that issue!

So, what do you do when there's no talking, particularly if your cause is just and right? Well, the end justifies the means, doesn't it? or does it? Well, it doesn't as we're going to

see! Esau, looked at him at the end of verse 1, my family builder, replies, 'here I am, dad! I'm your obedient son, look at my record, isn't it just wonderful'. Can you see him? it's oozing with hypocrisy! He's been to places, he's done things that Isaac in his wildest dreams, in his lowest hour wouldn't ever even begin to contemplate. My family builder, with all that that conjured up, b&s, about the building of the divine family, 'here I am, dad, and I'm ready for the job!' Well, what an ecclesia that would be! 'And he said, I am old and I don't know the day of my death; now therefore, take thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow and go out to the field and take me some venison; And make me (I want you to notice the pronouns here, there's a real concentration on 'Number One'), 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'. It's all to satisfy the longing of Isaac for one last meal, perhaps, provided by his son of that meat which was the result of the exploits of his champion boy!

And Rebekah reacts and sends for Jacob. Verse 6, Esau's gone to the field, that's where he properly belonged, that was his field of endeavour, and he went to hunt. And Jacob was looking after sheep, perhaps, and 'Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison (and then she adds something to what he said) that I may eat, and bless thee before Yahweh before my death'. Now if you examine the words that Isaac spake to Esau you won't find in them a reference to blessing him before Yahweh. That's an addition by Rebekah, and it's probably in some sense a problem, because that while it's true that when you come over to the blessing which was stolen in verses 27 to 29, that there is clearly reference in there to issues before Yahweh. I believe, b&s and young people, that if Rebekah had done nothing, if she had allowed Isaac to bless Esau with the blessing that Jacob received by deception, it would not have made one scrap of difference to the final outcome, because you see, for a start, God had said to her in chapter 25, 'the elder shall serve the younger'. It wasn't going to matter if Isaac blessed the elder in preference to the younger; and, when you come to consider the blessing itself anyway, it pertained to the right of the firstborn in the present, and while Jacob was undoubtedly interested in that, that is not the things that were to come that were of real interest to him, that is, eternal things.

So, you see, what's happened here is that Rebekah's mind has taken the issues here up one step. Now sometimes this happens in ecclesial life as well; there may be an issue which in its own right may be relatively important, but in terms of the bigger issues, it may be relatively unimportant. But when people begin to talk about it in terms that 'unless you do this, then we're not upholding the truth and the name of God will be blasphemed' or what ever else it might be, then they bring it into the realm of the very important when it may not necessarily rightfully be there! Do you know what I mean? Human nature is very good at that, I can assure you. So, you see, she stepped it up a cog, it might have been better to step it down a cog, and to step away, because this is what happens, she puts her lovely boy, this upright man, this sincere man, with a vital conscience of the reality of God and the need for honesty and integrity, she puts him, as a mother, in the worst possible position that you could put your child in.

She says, 'go and bring me savoury meat', you go and prepare it, verse 8, she says, 'Now therefore, my son, obey my voice'; why does she say that? You think about this, put yourself in Jacob's shoes, you're honest, you're sincere, you don't go chasing the ladies, you are not a young man or young woman who does what Esau does. When it comes to dealing with people your word is your honour because as far as you're concerned, when any promise goes out of your lips, then that promise has been made in the presence of God, and it must be kept. It's a question of integrity before God, and this man is like that. Now, you put yourself in his shoes, and he has a mother who normally doesn't operate like this, she's taught him these principles. You know, as a young child she'd say, 'now Jacob, you shouldn't be stealing that from Esau, you know, that's his toy, let him play with it; I know he's a bully, but you let him play with it, give in; you know, biblical principles! And if you don't give in anyway, he'll go and tell, dad, and he can get away with almost anything'. She would have taught him lessons like that. You know, these are real people in a real house, just like your house, and if your house is like my house, it's not perfect because the parents are not perfect and the children are not perfect, and sometimes we get worn down with the issues of life, we get worn out; and, I know mothers who have been worn out and just a little more pressure can be the last straw that breaks the camel's back, and when that happens, sometimes we lose sight of principles and all sorts of things can happen:. But in this house, despite all of that, b&s and young people, this woman had raised Jacob with an integrity and a honesty, and a conscience toward God, and now she says to him, 'obey my voice because I want you to go and be dishonest!' Why is she saying obey my voice? because she knew he would if she said that! Normally she would just say, 'Jacob, go and do this' and he would do it, and he would say, 'I'd never refuse you, mom, you know that'. But she knows she's going to ask him something that he would not normally do. Mind you, he's 57, not as though he's a young boy anymore!

'Go to the flock and fetch me two good kids of the goats and I will make them savoury meat for thy father such as he loveth. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death'. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, in verse 11, 'behold Esau my brother is a hairy man and I'm a smooth man. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall become in his eyes' (and this is the Hebrew here, there are two words there, 'hayah' (1961) meaning 'to become or to exist', that's the word for 'seem'; but there's also another word that doesn't appear in the Authorized translation, that's the word 'ayin' (5869) which is the word for 'eyes'), 'I shall become in his eyes a cheat'. That's what the word 'deceiver' means, 'a cheat', and that was the worse thing for Jacob, that he should be in the eyes of his father who he loved and respected, a cheat! You know, that's a very powerful little lesson, young people, it is not beyond human nature to cheat on parents, is it? 'Where have you been tonight, boy, young lady?' 'Oh, we went to McDonald's and we just had a big Mac'. Who was there? 'Just one or two from the meeting, and then we came straight home'. It's always the truth, isn't it? or is it? If that was Jacob as he stood in a place where a choice needed to be made, whether to go here or go there, despite where Esau was going (and Esau would have been around), in his mind he would have said, I can't cheat on mom and dad, I couldn't do it! I couldn't cheat on them. That's what he was like, young people, and now his mother is saying to him, 'Jacob, I want you to cheat your dad'. And you can

see the beads of perspiration beginning to emerge on the brow, can't you?

'His father said unto him' (and she could see his reaction), you know, he wasn't like a pillar in a wall, this man had features, he had eyes, he had colour in his skin, and when you're embarrassed your skin goes red, doesn't it? and sometimes you get beads of perspiration coming out and you actually see some quivering and shaking and the jaw and the lip begin to move. She could see that, and she says, 'Upon me be thy curse, my son: only you must obey my voice and go and fetch me them'. So she's now prepared to accept the curse providing he obeys her voice. This is absolutely dreadful, isn't it? this is dreadful! Here's a Christadelphian sister of enormous standing, who's impelling her son to cheat his father, but surely the end justifies the means! Surely what she was trying to achieve was worth the effort. I mean, it was worth mopping the brow saying, 'I'll try and keep the sweat off', 'I'll try to squeeze the face until it goes white again'. The end never justifies the means no matter what! Let's make that perfectly clear to ourselves in our personal dealings one with the other, in our dealings with our parents, in our dealings with our brethren and sisters, in our dealings between ecclesias, it doesn't matter what the issues are, or how important you think they might be in the end result, the end never justifies the means, if the means are wrong, because God is simply not interested in it; He doesn't want to know anything about CHEATING!

And there are 6 deceptions here, aren't there? We'll go through these quickly because the focus is not really on Jacob (although you probably got the impression it is), it's not really on Jacob. There are 6 deceptions, (you know the story), verse 15, 'Rebekah took the goodly raiment of her eldest son (she took it) which was with her'. You'll notice that Esau's garments, the garment of the first born are in her keeping. That's interesting, she had her hands on those garments until she could give them to Jacob. She put them upon Jacob her younger son, and so there is the clothing, the first phase in this deception. He wore the clothing of the unworthy first born. In verse 16, you have the second stage of the deception, you have the skin; Jacob now had Esau's skin which you will remember was red all over when he was born, the colour of sin. Verse 17, 'She gave him the savoury meat which she had prepared and put them in his hand. He now had the works of Esau. The next one comes in verse 19, there is deceit, (he speaks with Esau's deceitful tongue). The next one comes in verse 20, there is hypocrisy, (he brings Yahweh into the picture in this deceit, which Esau would never have done or probably not). And the 6th one is just an outright lie, in verse 24, 'Are you my son, my very son Esau? Yes, I am!'. It's awful isn't it, it's awful to watch a godly man do this sort of thing in issues like this, in the presence of his father and mother.

And she was there, can you see her? Can you get a picture in your mind of this old man, blind, lying on his bed, sick, weakly, approached by Jacob dressed in Esau's clothing, and his mother who has prepared all this, with her heart pounding, standing behind the curtains here, so she can hear the conversation inside that tent. Can you get a picture of that? Can you see that? Can you see her brow? Do you think she'd be standing behind that curtain, sort of, with her hands in her pockets, sort of speaking, saying, 'well, I'm a fly on the wall; this is really interesting', or do you think her heart would be pounding away, just quivering all over, as she watches her own honest boy tell

lies under her compulsion to his father? 'Come near my son' (bring it near to me), verse 25, 'and I will eat of my son's venison that 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, (now his belly was full) 'Come near now, and kiss me, my son'. You see, there were still suspicions there, and if you read this record carefully, Isaac takes a bit of convincing. He might have been blind, he might have been sick, he might have wanted to eat, but he wasn't prepared to just give the blessing without being sure!

Verse 18, 'He came to his father and his father said, 'who are you my son? And Jacob said, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me'. End of verse 20, when he's asked 'how is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? Oh, because Yahweh thy God brought it to me'. Oh, that was a jarring mistake, wasn't it? Oh, you can just see Rebekah behind that curtain saying to herself, 'O, Jacob, don't say that! Esau doesn't talk like that!' And Isaac said to Jacob, 'come near, I pray thee, (verse 21), 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 said (this is why he's suspicious, his ears weren't failing; his eyes might have been dim), he says, 'the voice is Jacob's voice, the hands are the hands of Esau'. B&S and young people, this is appalling, the voice is the spokesman of the heart, Luke 6:45, 'out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh'. 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, (the heart is Jacob's heart which is pounding away because I don't normally do this, this is not me, why am I here? I wish I was anywhere but here right now), but the hands, the works are the works of Esau'. Have you ever been in that situation, b&s? Why I tell this story, when I tell this story normally, I guess, it's become almost a happening by now, but I'll tell it again, but it's embarrassing for me, because it's one of those situations in life that I remember, like the ones which I said were etched on our minds, we can't forget them because we let our God down?

I don't know if you'll classify this as being terribly serious, but to me it was awful. I worked once for a boss, and my brother worked for him as well, so he knows what I'm talking about! He was a real go-getter, a money grabber, and by the way, b&s, I believe was responsible for the death of one of our brethren; and he said to me one day (and he's next to the big boss), he said to me, 'Jim, do a little job for me'. (and I was one of these up and coming people long since passed that, I'll assure you, you see, they pick on you) 'Do a little job for me, Jim,(I worked for a tire company), we've a company down the road who's selling tractor tires for a price that we can't match, in fact they're selling them for half the price that we can sell them for. I want to find out why? You go down and you masquerade as a farmer from the north (you know, from somewhere up near Jamestown) and you ask them what they can do for tires, and see if you can find out where they're getting these things from!' Well, I was told to do this, an order from the boss; I didn't feel comfortable about it, I can tell you; as I walked down that street, having been taught by my parents (and I was only in my late teens or early 20's or there about) all the things that my parents had taught me were coming back. Tell the truth, boy! there's one thing you've got to do all through your life, tell the truth, tell it as it is! and another voice in my mind is the voice of the boss saying, 'you go and find out!' I went down there, my masquerading as a farmer from Jamestown was the worst acting you'll ever see in your life. I was a blithering idiot! I could hardly put two words together,

and I got out of there as fast as I could; I can't even recall what I said to the boss, he must have thought I was a blithering idiot too! and I have never ever forgotten that! because my mom and dad had taught me not to tell lies, don't cheat! And in business today, brethren, you don't get anywhere without being in that kind of arena; somewhere it's going to impact upon you. I'm glad I work for the government, but I guess you'd say that most of them cheat every day anyway! You got the point?

Well, that's how Jacob felt, he just wanted to get out of there! And now his father says, 'hey, come here, come right up close, boy', verse 26, 'And kiss me my son'. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and it finally convinced him, because Jacob had Esau's clothes on and they were the clothes of the field. And this is what compels him to do what he now does: 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 Yahweh hath blessed: Therefore, God give thee of the dew of heaven'. I want you to notice the word 'therefore' in verse 28, you ought to underline it or circle it, because it's a follow-on from the statement of verse 27, which tells us that Isaac blessed Jacob in the guise of Esau because of his connection with the field; and, the blessing has to do primarily with those things that pertain to the field and it also has to do with the blessings of the firstborn.

Now the birthright conferred three privileges: there was the priesthood of the family, there was the authority of the family, and there was the inheritance, or as we know it, the double portion which was given to the firstborn. It could be forfeited, of course, by misconduct as it was in a number of cases. But when you look at what Isaac is doing here, it becomes very clear that his blessing has to do with those issues (by the way, in the reverse order) but pertaining to the present. The stolen blessing has to do with the inheritance: 'the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine'. Now those are things that are of the present, aren't they? Oh, yes, to be sure, I guess there will be blessings like that from the kingdom, but Isaac means now! The authority: 'let people serve thee, nations bow down to thee and be lord over thy brethren'. He couldn't do that because God had said otherwise, but anyway, it has to do with present authority. And the priesthood: 'let thy mother's sons bow down to thee, blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee' That's the only phrase, by the way, which is seemingly drawn from the promises made to Abraham, but it still has to do with the issues of the present. It relates, as we say in the transparency, to the rights of the firstborn now; so, you see, b&s and young people, the blessing of verse 27 to 29, is not the blessing which the apostle Paul refers to in Hebrews 11 verse 20, when he said, 'Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come'. It's not that blessing because, you know, it wasn't given by faith, it did not emanate from faith, it emanated from stubbornness.

And as this man settles back in his bed, belly full, you can just see him, can't you? he's done his job! I don't know what his mind was thinking, it may have even been the thought, well, this has been a problem between myself and Rebekah for 57 years, but now it's all over and I'm about to die, and I won that battle. That's what he thought! Verse 30, 'It came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and

Jacob was yet scarce gone out' (this is divine providence at work here), you can just see this, can't you? Jacob, he's itching to get out of there, absolutely itching to get out. And as soon as his dad is ready to settle down, Jacob is in a panic to get out of there; he's out! and the curtains are still flapping, and Esau bawls in , 'Hey, dad here I am'. Jacob had scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, than Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, 'Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou?' Now, can you imagine, he bolts upright in bed; he's just been settling down, full tummy, ah, this is wonderful, I'm ready to die! all of a sudden Esau says 'Here I am, dad', and because he can't see he says, 'Who are you?? And then something happens to Isaac, b&s, that sometimes has to happen to us, if we are stubborn like this!

Esau says, 'I am thy son, thy firstborn, Esau' (I'm a very obedient boy and I've done what you said to do, dad; here's your venison!) 'And Isaac trembled very exceedingly and said, Who?' Now look at these words here: 'trembled very exceedingly', in the margin it says, 'trembled with a great trembling greatly', when you look up the Hebrew, the word 'gadol' means 'great' (1419) and the word for 'trembled' means 'to shudder with terror' (2729), so he shuddered with terror very exceedingly, or 'gadol' greatly. (Rotherham translates it 'he trembled with an exceeding great trembling'; the Interlinear bible translates it 'he was terrified with a very great terror'.) Now do you get a picture of this? He's just settled down, for the last issue of his life has been resolved (so he thinks) and the next thing, his whole body is shaking and quivering and trembling as if he'd been hit by an earthquake! This man, b&s and young people, is being brought up against a brick wall at a hundred mile an hour; bang ! like that, and the hand of God is in this, the timing is impeccable; and while Rebekah is outside that curtain there, probably trying to console her son and wipe the sweat off his brow, God is at work here, b&s. He's looking down upon this scene (it's like ecclesial life isn't it? family life sometimes!) and He knows how to marshal, He knows what to do, timing is perfect. Do you know why He's doing it? He wants to perfect Isaac, He'll deal with the others later on. Do you realize, as we'll see in a moment, that there are actually 3 deceivers in this chapter, and 1 deceived; and the only one who gets any benefit out of the events of this chapter, is the one who is dreadfully deceived.

It's just the way God works sometimes, isn't it? He doesn't need, b&s, He doesn't need you and me to intervene, and to use means that we think are justified to achieve an end which we think is right, and push it using principles that He cannot stomach. He doesn't need that, He just needs honesty and integrity and truthfulness and sensitivity! And look at Isaac, there's an immediate change, verse 33, Who?, 'Where is he that taketh venison and brought it me and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him'. And you can see his countenance settling, the quaking is gone and the shaking has subsided, the countenance is resolute, the voice deepens, the pounding heart settles, Yea, and he shall be blessed'; which just so happens, b&s, that Jacob was blessed with the blessings of heaven and the dew of the earth, but he didn't really care about it. Nor did he really care about being lord over his brother; so, that when he came back from Haran, you remember in Genesis chapter 32, and he sent messengers

to Esau and the messengers came to and then he met Esau his brother, on several occasions he bows down to his brother, before Isaac, and says, 'My lord, let thy servant find grace in thy sight', and Esau, you can keep the lordship of the family right here and now because I don't want it. It doesn't matter to me, all I want are the things to come!

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding and bitter cry; the words are very similar to those we find in verse 33 concerning Isaac, 'Bless me, bless me also my father'. Can you see this big boy, this is the big 'he man', his muscles popping out all over, this is a man that can shoot arrows between the eyes of antelopes, this is the man that can squire around girls; he's crying like a baby (get the tissue box out! he's weeping like a baby!), 'Haven't you got a blessing for me? It's almost laughable isn't it? 'Thy brother hath come with subtlety and hath taken away thy blessing'. And then in comes his human nature, 'Well, you called him the right name anyway; is he not rightly named Jacob, for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?'

And Isaac had, b&s! he had, but it wasn't the kind of blessing he expected or wanted, but really it was a blessing in a very real sense. Isaac says 'Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?' And then, by faith, Isaac under the pressure of verse 38, 'Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. He lifted up his voice and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, yes, I have, son! Behold, thy dwelling shall be away from the fatness of the earth' (that's the RSV's translation of verse 39) Behold, away from the fatness of the earth, shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven from above'. That's why he went to the land of Edom, it was dry and barren and arid like his character. It was red like his skin and his hair colouring; that's the place that Esau rightfully belonged in, outside the house, outside the truth! That's what he'd chosen and now Isaac finally acknowledges that, for 57 years he has clung to the notion that this boy is the rightful firstborn, (oh, I know, one day, oh, I hear these stories you're telling me, I think I hear them, he hasn't been a very good boy, I know that, but he'll come good one day, just give him time. I mean his brain is blown by all of these things, but give him time, he'll come good! I want him to come good; what will they think of me if he doesn't come good? They won't give me any jobs in the ecclesia!). But the day came, b&s, when Isaac realized that Esau's place was out there, and what he's really saying is, 'listen, boy, I'm a gentle man, it's the first time I've ever done it in my life, but the time has come for you to get the boot!' I think some of you will say, you're a bit over the top! I ask you to think about it.

Look what he says next, verse 40, 'By thy sword shalt thou live' (do Christadelphians live by their sword? is aggressiveness and brutality part of Christadelphian life? Is that the sort of thing we want in the ecclesia? or does that belong out there?); 'By thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother (he's the spiritual man, Esau, you haven't got a spiritual brain in your cranium; there's not one lobe of your grey matter that's got any spiritual tinge to it at all; you are dead from the shoulders up, boy! and I've had a blind

spot for 57 years, and I just couldn't see it!); 'And it shall come to pass when thou shalt break his dominion (or have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck'. What's he saying there? You think about this! (come on, really settle on that passage, young people, what's he saying?) 'It shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion? The word means 'tramp about or to ramble about', Rotherham translates it 'when thou shalt roam at large', and the RSV says 'but when you shalt break loose'. 'But when you break loose from your brother thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck'. What he's saying is this, Esau, while you hang around here, in the presence of Jacob, you'll never be comfortable, boy. You haven't got a conscience, there's nothing really in your head to be appealed to, but one thing you can tell, is that God requires a different kind of life from you than you're prepared to live and Jacob is living that kind of life, and while you're around him you'll never be comfortable, you'll always be some kind of problem to him; Esau you don't belong here, get out, if you want peace, get out, and we might get some peace too!'

Now if Esau got out into Edom and decided that what he'd left behind was far better than what he now had, b&s and young people, like the prodigal son, he could come back and Isaac would have welcomed him with open arms and said, 'Boy, I never expected this, but you can come back; if that's your attitude and if it's firm and established and there are fruits meet for repentance which are there for all to see; boy, we'll have you back any time, but while you are like you are, you've been this way for 57 years, that is where you belong!' 'And Esau hated Jacob' so he proved his father was right!

These are pretty tough issues, aren't they? Don't ever deceive yourself that it's not the same today! But the time comes, chapter 28, 'Isaac called Jacob and blessed him (this is the blessing of faith), verse 1, 'he blessed him and charged him' (you see, b&s and especially our young people the truth has incredible blessings, wonderful blessings, but it also has responsibilities; if you want the blessings of the truth, you have to be prepared to meet it's responsibilities; that's why Isaac blessed him and charged him, he charged him with responsibility.) 'Arise, he says, don't you dare take a wife of the daughters of Canaan (we don't want any of those emptyheads here; I know they look pretty sometimes, some of them look ugly, but anyway, they look pretty to the flesh. Don't you worry about those girls out there!); Jacob, you go to my family up in Haran 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'. And we haven't got time, of course, to go into this phrase, thy mother's brother, but that's very important in the life of Jacob.

But we're talking about Isaac, and look what he says in verse 3, 'And God Almighty bless thee'. Now here we meet 'El Shaddai', Isaac's last words before his disappearance from the record, because you hear nothing more from him now for 63 years, no further words are recorded of this man. This is the end, b&s and young people, the last word. He says, 'El Shaddai' (the strength of the nourishers) I've seen His hand at work in my life, the events of the previous day or days fresh in his mind. Oh, He's been a nourishing Father to be, and I have been stupid in not listening to Rebekah, when she passed on the information, that came 57 years ago'. Oh, b&s, our God is a

nourishing Father, the things He puts up with in our lives that He may work with us, we wouldn't put up with as parents. He deals firmly with those who will not respond, He cannot overlook rebellion, but He's a nourishing Father! 'El Shaddai bless thee and make thee fruitful and multiply thee, that thou mayest be an ecclesia of people'. The word is 'qahal' (6951), the Old Testament equivalent for this word 'multitude' of people, 'qahal', an assemblage of people. He's going to build the ecclesia, it's still being built. 'And give the blessing of Abraham to thee and to thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land within thou art a stranger which God gave unto Abraham'. Isn't it significant, that the last recorded word of Isaac is the name of his father, because there is a father and a son working here; there is Isaac and Jacob now working together, like Abraham and Isaac worked together. And they're working together like that, b&s and young people, because God worked that way with Abraham, and He's worked that way with Isaac, and He's working that way with the multitude. Do you remember His name, the Divine surname? when He had His family in Egypt awaiting their exodus He could say to Moses, 'I am He who will become, I am the Elohim of Abraham, your father, I am the Elohim of Isaac, the son, I am the Elohim of Jacob, the multitudinous seed'!

Brethren and sisters and young people, let us go from this place and from this time with a determination to give added meaning to the words, 'We, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise'.