

Jacob: Chosen Genesis 25 & 27

Rest in God's sovereignty and take responsibility for your choices.

Is God sovereign, or is man free? I cannot tell you how many times I have been asked to reconcile the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. On my list of FAQs, this is on the top of the list. Theologians have spilled oceans of ink attempting to answer this question.

- Some will argue for the sovereignty of God – before time began God made a plan for all of human history, a plan that will not fail, a plan that includes His election of certain individuals to be saved rather than other individuals. While it may appear that men and women make choices, ultimately God has predetermined all decisions and all outcomes.
- Others will argue for free will – God may have a plan that will ultimately be fulfilled, but He doesn't know how or when because His plan is dependent on human choices, including each person's choice whether to believe or disbelieve in Jesus Christ.

Mutually exclusive ideas, right? Both can't be true. Is there any way to reconcile God's sovereignty and free will?

- Calvinists will argue for sovereignty of God, while diminishing the freedom of man.
- Arminians will argue for the freedom of man while diminishing the sovereignty of God.

I don't accept either attempt at reconciliation. The Bible teaches both without attempting to reconcile them. In fact both must be true for us to live well and wisely.

- To find REST, God must be sovereign. I need to know that eternity is secure.
- In order to take responsibility, I must know that my decisions matter. Real choices with real consequences.

This morning we are going to answer this question not through theological propositions, not through an attempt at reconciling these ideas, but through a story. Most of the theology of the OT is revealed to us through story. The story reveals how both of these ideas work together in human experience for the accomplishing of God's will on earth.

Point: We must *rest* in God's sovereignty AND take *responsibility* for our choices

READ Genesis 25:19-26

1. **God's promise** is fulfilled through His sovereign choice

- God's choice, not human effort.
 - Gen 25:21, 26. **Twenty** years of waiting
 - The problem of infertility is a theme throughout the entire Bible
 - Isaac could not guarantee that his wife would get pregnant
 - Probably didn't pray at first. Assumed it would happen.
 - Discovered in time that they needed divine intervention
 - Then dream fulfilled, but not as expected – Gen 25:22
 - Rebekah knew the promise. I don't need twins; just one would be fine.
 - I've never been pregnant with twins. Hard. This is extreme.

- Lit. “smashed themselves inside her”
 - “If it is like this, why am I here?” That is, “better not to be pregnant”
 - God is doing something beyond Rebekah, Isaac and 2 boys – Gen 25:23a
- God’s choice, not human tradition – Gen 25:23b
 - Firstborn male – highest status in family; authority; double portion
 - Second born – single portion; sometimes gifts; daughters received dowry
 - Isaac not the firstborn; Ishmael
 - Gideon – youngest in his family
 - David – youngest in his family
- God’s choice, not human virtue
 - There are no heroes in this story – only sinners. Kent Hughes or Blake?
 - Isaac – passive sensualist. Genesis 25:28
 - Rebekah – energetic manipulator
 - Watering camels
 - Agrees immediately to leave her family
 - Jacob – conniving deceiver
 - Esau – foolish materialist

This family is a mess! God chose to work through this family, this son, Jacob. Why?

- God’s choice demonstrates God’s mercy
 - Romans 3:10-12 - None righteous
 - God always chooses the unworthy – 1 Cor 1:27-29
 - Why? So that He can get all the credit – Ephesians 1:3-6
- God’s choice demonstrates God’s sovereignty
 - Need to be very careful how we define this word. In some English translations, the word “sovereignty” does not occur. Where it does occur, it is used to translate two concepts – authority and power
 - NOT: God makes all choices for all people
 - Sovereignty = authority
 - Ex – police officer can carry a gun; arrest you
 - Ex – teacher can assign a grade
 - Romans 9:10-13. While children were still in the womb
 - God has the right to pursue His purposes. He is the Creator
 - Sovereignty = power
 - God has the ability to accomplish His purposes
 - God’s promise is to bless all nations – Genesis 12
 - All nations will be blessed because God’s authority and power – Rev 5:9-10

Application #1: Rest in God’s sovereignty

- Psalm 46:10 - Cease striving and know that I am God.
- Romans 8:29-30
- Hold on a minute. I can rest in God’s sovereignty because I belong to God. But it’s not fair that He chooses some and not others. RIGHT! God is not fair.
 - If God were fair = all would receive what they deserve
 - Instead, God is gracious – He sent His Son to die for all
 - God is just – He gives everyone an opportunity to accept or reject.

2. **God's promise** is fulfilled through free human choice

- Sovereignty is NOT: God makes all of your choices for you
- God can exercise His power and authority however He chooses
- Clear and consistent testimony of Bible reveals that God chooses to delegate His authority and power to creatures made in His image.
 - God includes men and women in the outworking of His plan
 - Being made in His image enables us to participate in His plan
 - Acts 2:23 delivered over by God, crucified by you
 - Includes salvation – believe on the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Motivates prayer – pray without ceasing
 - Compels evangelism – do the work of an evangelist

Application #2: Rest in God's sovereignty AND take *responsibility* for our own choices

A. Esau sold his birthright – Genesis 25:27-34

- DEFINE: birthright = status of "firstborn"
 - Authority, double portion
 - Nothing better a father could give.
 - In this family it included becoming heir of Abrahamic Promises.
 - Esau sold it for a bowl of soup
- **Esau:** Big, tough, strong, uncivilized, worldly, unthinking, simple, foolish, controlled by appetite, short-sighted, impetuous.
 - Tragic, pathetic figure
 - "swallow"; barbaric, "gulp it down"
 - "red stuff"
 - 25:32 – about to die. I will never say to my kids, "starving kids in..."
 - 25:34 – up, down, out the door; concludes with moral commentary
 - Hebrews 12:15–16
- **Jacob:** Jacob: Cold, calculating, greedy, conniving, ambitious, deceptive, backstabber
 - Certainly not cast in a good light
 - Jacob = sounds like "heel"; meant "one who follows at the heel, rear guard." Had a positive connotation. As his character developed, negative connotation attached to his name; "one who grasps, over-reacher, assailant, deceiver"
 - Jacob takes advantage of his brother's character and vulnerability
 - Good brother = sure, take all you want
 - Bad brother = give me a dollar
 - Terrible brother = give me your inheritance
 - Hebrew "cook" = hunt. "Set a trap by cooking"
 - Jacob was a jerk, who wanted God's best
- In this story, neither brother cast in positive light. Yet their foolish/sinful decisions were used by God to accomplish His purposes
- Application: our choices have consequences

B. Jacob stole the blessing (Genesis 27:1-17)

- **Isaac** – Gen 27:1-4
 - Birthright = legal claim to the inheritance
 - Blessing = father's decision to give it to a particular son
 - Isaac knew God's intention, but wanted to give it to Esau
- **Rebekah** – Gen 27:5-10
 - Rebekah didn't need to manipulate. It was promised.
 - Jacob desires the outcome, but is afraid of getting caught.

- Rebekah has a plan – clothes, skins
 - **Jacob** – (27:18-29)
 - Jacob enters with meal
 - Isaac unconvinced – food smells good, but sounds like Jacob
 - Jacob directly lies to his father
 - Isaac convinced, blesses Jacob – Gen 27:28-29
 - Isaac’s favoritism could have undermined the promise – Gen 26:34
 - **Esau** (27:30-41)
 - Esau enters
 - Gen 27:32-33; Gen 28:3-4
- **Who is the hero of the story?**
 - Not Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Esau
 - God is the hero
 - Kent Hughes. What are these stories about? “The invincible determination of God to keep his word despite the prevailing unbelief and unfaithfulness of his people.”
- **Sovereignty of God in action.** Not making all of the choices, just giving people the false perception that they are involved. God all-powerful, using His authority and wisdom even through sinful people to accomplish His purposes.

Application

1) Take RESPONSIBILITY for your choices...

- **Responsible to believe**
 - John 3:16 – not “whoever is elect...” but “whoever believes”
 - We must say yes to God’s offer of eternal life. What’s holding you back?
- **Responsible to obey**
 - Having believed, we are called to obey.
 - Pray, share, serve. Abundant Christian life. Life works when we abide.
 - Consequences for the entire family
 - Esau wanted to kill Jacob; Jacob had to leave his home
 - Rebekah lost her favorite son
 - Edomites rejected Exodus generation; Edomites sided with Babylonians

2) REST in the sovereignty of God...

- **Rest in the security of your salvation**
 - If you belong to Jesus, eternity is secure; you are loved and safe

Celebrate the security purchased for us through Jesus