

And she said, If it thus, why is this happening to me? So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided. The one shall be stronger than the other. The older shall serve the younger. When our days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in our womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak.

So they called his name Esau. Afterward, his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel.

So his name was called Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when she bore them.

When the boys grew up, Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man. Dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game.

[14 : 16] But Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted.

Therefore his name was called Aaron. Jacob said, Sell me your birth right now. Esau said, I'm about to die of what use is a birth right to me. Jacob said, Swear to me now.

So he swore to him and sold his birth right to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew. And he ate and drank and rose and went his way.

Thus Esau despised his birth right. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us.

We're going to sing again now. To God's praise. We'll sing from Psalm 20. Psalm 20. And we'll sing verses 1 to 5.

[15 : 20] Four stanzas. Jehovah hear thee in the day when trouble he doth send and when the name of Jacob's God thee from all ill defend.

Oh, let him help send from above out of his sanctuary. From Zion, his own holy hill, let him give strength to thee. Let him remember all thy gifts except thy sacrifice.

Grant thee thine heart's wish and fulfill thy thoughts and counsel wise. In thy salvation we will joy. In our God's name we will display our banners and the Lord thy prayers all fulfill.

These verses of Psalm 20 will stand to sing to God's praise. Jehovah hear thee in the day when thou art the angels send and let the name of Jacob's God and let the name of Jacob's God O Lord thy name be.

O Lord, let him help send from above out of his sanctuary.

[17 : 02] From Zion, his own holy hill, From Zion, his own holy hill, Let him give strength to thee.

Let him remember all thy gifts and set thy sacrifice.

Grant thee thine heart's wish wish and fulfill. Grant thee thine heart's wish and fulfill thy thoughts and counsel wise.

In thy salvation we will joy. In our God's name we will display our banners and the Lord.

And the Lord display our banners and the Lord thy prayers all fulfill.

[18 : 54] Let's pray for a moment.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word that we have sung. We thank you that this evening just as the psalmist was able to pen and write and write and sing.

Many years ago, we thank you that we can echo these words that in thy salvation we will join. We thank you that we are able to lift up the name of the Lord.

Even in the banners that we read of, we see the banner outside the church this evening. as we look forward to a few days of outreach for the young ones and we pray that in all that outreach that the name of Jesus would be lifted up.

That the salvation of God would be extended as the offer of the gospel is heard. And we pray that many of the young ones would hear and would believe and would be saved.

[20 : 05] We thank you that the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, let the children come to me. Don't hinder them. And we pray that there would be nothing that would hinder these young ones coming to the holiday club and nothing that would hinder these young ones coming to the Lord Jesus.

We pray for all who will be involved in the holiday club, for all those who lead. We thank you for those who have prepared and those who will give a lead on the days this week.

We ask, Lord, that you would help them, that you would give them strength, that you would give energy, that you would give that clarity of thought and that patience as well, that the love of Christ would be seen and felt from all that you have given this opportunity to serve.

We pray that the message would go forth in power and in simplicity as well. We thank you that often the children see the message of the gospel much more clearly than those who are well on in years.

And we ask that they would indeed see and hear the simple message of the gospel, that Jesus came and lived and died and rose so that sinners, whether young or old, would be saved if we believe in him.

[21 : 29] We pray that there would be nothing that would hinder the young ones from coming amongst ourselves as well. We confess that we are sinners, we are unworthy servants. And often, Lord, we fail and we fall.

Often there could be things in our own lives and the way that we act or react that can put people off as they think about coming to Jesus. We ask that there would be nothing of that, but that there would be unity and, Lord, that you would equip us for this work that you've called us to.

And we pray for every opportunity, for every conversation that you allow us to have about the gospel message about Jesus. Help us, we pray, day by day to be looking for opportunities.

Your word says that when we are saved by grace, there are good works that are prepared in advance for us to do. And we ask, Lord, that in this week ahead we would be alert to these good works, that you would help us to have the courage and the sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to be able to reach out and to speak to people about Jesus, that our conversations would be seasoned with the salt of the gospel.

We pray for every place where the gospel is preached this evening and for the congregations around us here in Tarbert. We thank you that the gospel is heard in each one and we ask that you would add your blessing and we pray, especially for Stuart tonight as he opens your word in Carloway and we ask that as he opens his mouth that you would fill his mouth and that he would know your blessing and that the congregation there as we pray for ourselves here that we would be open and responsive to the word of God.

[23 : 15] We thank you that the word of God is living and active, it's sharper than a two-edged sword. We thank you that it does not return to you empty but it works, it achieves much and so Lord, we pray that you would be working in this place tonight, that you would work in our hearts, that each one of us would come to rejoice in the salvation that is found in Christ alone and we pray that as those who are in Christ that you would sanctify us, that you would make us more like Jesus and we thank you for grace.

We thank you that we read and we sing about Jacob's God and even as we see the first pictures of Jacob, we see that he, like us, fell short in many ways but we are those who are blessed to know and to be saved and sustained by the God of all grace and so help us to see and to be blessed as we receive that grace this evening and we pray all this together with the forgiveness of our sins in Jesus' name.

Amen. If you could open your Bibles please at Genesis chapter 25. I read from the ESV tonight. I'm kind of jumping a little between translations in the preparation so some have got NIV, some have got ESV, some have got AV and there's not a huge difference but you can follow along through the verses.

So Genesis chapter 25, I'm conscious that it's been a while since we've been in this book and I want to just take a moment to remember the theme of the book and I think in very big picture terms the theme of the book of Genesis could be summed up in one word and it's the word promise.

[25 : 26] We could go back to Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15 and we hear the first promise of blessing but we're not going there tonight. But what we see very clearly threaded through this whole book is the promise of God to his undeserving people.

And our first point this evening just by way of recap is the promise of God. Now all of us are familiar with what a promise is.

We are people who make promises to each other often. We promise to phone. We promise to visit each other.

We promise to tidy our rooms. we promise to do the dishes. We promise to do our homework on time.

And we try to keep these promises but we don't always manage to keep the promises that we make. And people make promises to us. You know we buy a new device.

[26 : 36] We buy a new Hoover. It's got a lifetime guarantee. I think the last Hoover we bought had a lifetime guarantee. The manufacturer promises that this bit of kit is reliable.

It's got a lifetime guarantee. The reality is it doesn't. It's pretty trachled already. You know we could take another example.

We buy a ferry ticket. Attempted not to go on with this one. We buy a ferry ticket. We have a promise to get from Uig to Tarbert on a specific date. That's a promise but it may not always happen or at least it may not happen on the date or the time that we were first promised.

So we know about promises. We know about how shaky promises are in this world and in our experience. but the God of Genesis our God who does not change he is the God who makes promises and who keeps his promises.

[27 : 57] If we glance back to the beginning of the chapter in Genesis 25 we see the name Abraham and if we rewind in fact let's just do that for a moment or two let's rewind back to Genesis 12 because in Genesis 12 we hear the promise of God to Abraham which then we follow all the way through the book so Genesis 12 and at verse 1 the Lord had said to Abraham go from your country your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

So there's the call of God to go and then there's the promise and I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. That's God's promise to Abraham and it's a huge promise.

But when we come to the end of Abraham's life in Genesis chapter 25 how many children did Abraham have in his family or how many children did Abraham have from his wife Sarah?

Well the answer is you know there's just one Isaac. So there's this huge promise of God and at the end of Abraham's life there's just one just one child.

[29 : 52] So did that mean that God's promise to Abraham was broken? Of course that's not what it meant. it meant that God's promise to Abraham was still being fulfilled.

God's promise to Abraham was bigger and it stretched further than the span of Abraham's life. And as we read on through Genesis we will see God's promise coming true bit by bit over the course of time.

So Abraham in this world he experienced just a small taste of the blessing that God had promised. But little did Abraham know that from his family line would come Jesus.

The fount of every blessing. And when we think about it as we trust in Jesus we in a sense become children of Abraham.

[31 : 08] the children in Sunday school they sing a song. Father Abraham had many sons.

Many sons had Father Abraham and I am one of them and so are you. So let's all praise the Lord. So as we kind of dip back into the book of Genesis let's do so at praising the Lord.

as we see the bigger picture. Let's as we step back into the book of Genesis do so trusting the Lord and holding on to his promises because that's the recurring big point of application in the book of Genesis.

God's promises God's word God's plans they can be they can be trusted and so we're to hold on to God we're to hold on to the plans the promises that he makes to us.

So all that by way of introduction and now we turn from the kind of the broad introduction to the text that we read tonight. So first of all the promise of God which is the overarching theme in the book.

[32 : 31] The second point this evening is the problems that unbelief causes. And that takes us from verse 12 to verse 18.

And in this little section we have a list of Ishmael's sons. This is the account of the family line, verse 12, of Abraham's son Ishmael whom Sarah's slave Hagar the Egyptian bore to Abraham.

These are the names of the sons of Ishmael and we have the names of the sons as they follow on through to the following verses. Now I don't really want to park long on this point but this section takes us back to a time in Abraham's life when he doubted the word and the promises of God. And we could rewind back to Genesis 16. And in Genesis 16 Abraham and Sarah are struggling because they have this promise of children.

But it seemed to Abraham and to Sarah that they couldn't have children. And so this promise of God didn't seem to align with their experience.

[33 : 58] They're frustrated, they're fearful, and so what do they do? Well, they doubt God's word, they doubt God's promise, and they try to fix things themselves.

And the result of that was that Abraham has a child, not with Sarah, his wife, but with Sarah's servant, Hagar. and this child is a son, and his name is Ishmael.

And it was the wrong thing to do. It was an unbelieving thing to do. It was a sinful thing to do. And yes, Abraham and Sarah, they're forgiven for their sin, but that sin had consequences that bled into the family life.

And verse 18 makes that clear. It says in verse 18 that they, that's Ishmael's sons, they lived in hostility toward all the tribes related to them.

So this son Ishmael and his sons are forever at war with the family. There's huge conflict that can be traced back to this sin of unbelief.

[35 : 33] And we see that conflict all the way through the Old Testament and beyond it. And it's all traced back to the sin of unbelief.

There are problems. that unbelief causes in the extended family of Abraham. So what's the application for us tonight?

Well again the application is very similar to the first point, we have to trust God. Even when sometimes his promises seem far removed from our experience.

Even when sometimes we're struggling to hang on. Even when sometimes we are shaken in our experience and in providence, we have to trust God.

Why? Because he's trustworthy And his ways are perfect. Sometimes his ways are way beyond our comprehension.

[36 : 36] And sometimes his timings are far from what we would want. But his timings are perfect and his ways are perfect.

And he is trustworthy and we experience happiness, a blessing when we do trust God.

And the converse of that is we experience all kinds of trouble. Abraham would tell us this. David the psalmist would tell us this.

we often take ourselves and those we love into all kinds of problems when we go our own sinful unbelieving way.

So there's the problems that unbelief causes and we see that in this little section where we're given the family line of Ishmael. The promise of God, the problems that unbelief causes.

[37 : 39] Thirdly, there's the pressures of living by faith. Verse 19. This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac and Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, the Aramean from Paddan Aram, and sister of Laban, the Aramean.

So, just to recap, Ishmael, who we've just glanced back at, he was not, he was not the child that God promised to Abraham.

The blessing that God promised to Abraham was not going to come through the family line of Ishmael. Isaac was the child that was promised to Abraham, and blessing was going to come through the family line of Isaac.

That was God's promise. promise. And that's what Isaac and Rebekah believed, and yet the way of faith wasn't without trials and pressures.

[39 : 03] Verse 21, Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless.

And so once again, we're seeing this stress, we're seeing this pressure. Abraham and Sarah, they have this promise, but they don't seem to be able to have children.

And now we see Isaac and Rebekah, and they're in the path that God has determined his children would walk on, and yet they don't seem to be able to have children either.

And so the faith of God's people is being tested yet again. So what do they do? What do Isaac and Rebekah do when there's these 25 years, the commentators reckon?

Where no children are coming? Well, thankfully, Isaac and Rebekah don't do what Abraham and Sarah did. They don't take matters into their own hands.

[40 : 14] They don't look for someone else to take into this plan. They don't look for a Hagar. What they do is they pray. Isaac prayed to the Lord, verse 21, on behalf of his wife.

And in God's time, we read that there's a pregnancy. Still in verse 21, the Lord answered Isaac's prayer, and his wife, Rebekah, became pregnant.

But just if we try to think into the lives of these two people, it wouldn't have been easy. We're just reading a few lines in an account.

But we can imagine all these months and years and conversations when Isaac and Rebekah were determining to trust God, and yet all their friends are having children, and nothing's happening in their lives.

You can imagine the stress in that situation. One commentator, Baldwin, says, to be the recipient of God's promises did not mean that everything would be plain sailing.

[41 : 44] And we need to know that. In terms of our application here, we need to take hold of this, and we need to know this, there can be times in our lives when it's hard to trust God.

There are times in our lives when we will feel under pressure as we seek to trust God and as we seek to live by faith.

And Rebekah and Isaac are an illustration of this. So there's all these years of barrenness, and then eventually there's this pregnancy, and we're brought into the period of pregnancy here, so how does the pregnancy go?

Well, again, it doesn't appear to be an easy time. Verse 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. 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.

[42 : 57] Now, again, this sounds stressful. So you think about Rebecca going through this pregnancy and feeling all this within her.

This is pressurized. This is a difficult time. Wearsby, the commentator, says, the babies in our womb were struggling with each other.

The Hebrew word means to crush or oppress, suggesting that the fetal movements were not normal. So all this would have felt very uncomfortable for Rebecca, but she, together with Isaac, they continued trusting God through years of barrenness, then into pregnancy, a difficult pregnancy, but there's still trust in God.

But there's pressure. It's not easy. It's not easy living by faith. So if we move on to the next section here, verse 24, we can ask the question, well, what about the birth?

The time came for birth. Was the birth easy? And the answer is not really. That wasn't easy either. When the time came for her to give birth, verse 24, there were twin boys in her womb.

[44 : 26] The first that came out was red. His whole body was like a hairy garment, so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out with his hand grasping Esau's heel.

It was almost like a preview for what was going to happen in the rest of their lives. So he was named Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when Rebecca gave birth to them.

So there's this difficult birth. So what about the early years? Next. How was the family home? For two people, for one couple who are living by faith, what was the early years?

What did they look like? How was the family home? How was married life? Well, again, we have to say that it's not easy. verse 27, the boys grew up.

Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob.

[45 : 35] Is this the portrait of a perfect family? Esau's far from it. From birth, the boys are very different.

Esau's a kind of man's man, he's a hunter, he's outdoors, Jacob's more in the recipe books, he's content in the kitchen, different characters.

characters. And not only are they different characters, but they don't really seem to get on very well. That's the pretext. There's tension between them, and there's tension between Isaac and Rebecca, because they have what no parent should have, they have their favourites.

And Rebecca sides with Jacob, they work out the recipes together, in the kitchen, and Esau sides with Isaac as they go out into the field, and they do battle as they go hunting.

So they have their favourites. And remember, all this chaos is happening in the lives of believers.

[47 : 07] All this mess of the early years is happening in the home of a couple who are trying to live by faith.

They're God's people. there are pressures when we are living by faith.

Sometimes we hear people saying, if you follow Jesus, then you're following Jesus into a life of peace, tranquility. All your problems will go away.

all the stresses and strains will subside. It's not reality. There are pressures, there are particular pressures for a couple, for a family who are seeking to live by faith.

And so in application, the first thing is just to note that living by faith is not easy. there are pressures, there are struggles, there are trials, there are temptations that we encounter as

believers.

[48 : 22] And I'm not saying that to discourage anybody. I'm saying that because this is what the Bible teaches us. This is reality. And I think there's great encouragement in this. Because I imagine all of us who are Christians are struggling with something.

All of us have pressures and difficulties and battles. And often the devil will come in and he'll say to us, well you must be off track.

If you're going through hard times, you must be way off course. But what we often see in these pictures that we're given in the Bible is that to experience pressure and struggle is not an indicator that we've lost our way.

It's an indicator that we're actually on the way. Jesus said, as quoted so often, in this world you will have trouble. We sing in the hymn Amazing Grace through many dangers, toils and snares.

We have already come. It's the way of grace. So what do we do when we experience the kind of pressures that come into the life of believers?

[49 : 38] What are we to do when we experience these pressures? we're to do what Isaac and Rebekah did in the early years of their marriage. What did Isaac do when they were faced with all these years of barrenness?

It tells us in verse 21 that he prayed. And that, I think, was not a singular prayer. This is year after year after year of praying on behalf of his wife.

And what did Rebekah do when she's aware of all this turmoil within her? Well, verse 22 tells us she inquired of the Lord.

She prayed. And notice that when Isaac and Rebekah go through pressure and struggle and they pray, things remain relatively steady.

And notice also, when things go bad in the family home, when there are favourites and when there is tension, when there is all this conflict that is beginning to bubble up, there's no mention of prayer.

[50 : 58] there's no reference to Rebekah or Isaac inquiring about anything of the Lord. So there's some simple but crucial lessons for us to take in as we look at this couple, this family, who are seeking to live by faith, who are God's people but who are battling with pressures.

pressures of living by faith. That's the third point. The fourth point is we see here a privilege despised and that's in respect of Jacob, not Jacob but Esau and the birthright.

Verse 29, once when Jacob was cooking some stew, so we've moved on a few years now and we're seeing Jacob and Esau and we don't know what age they were exactly but they're not little tiny children.

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country famished. He said to Jacob, quick, let me have some of that red stew. I'm famished.

That's why he was called Edom. So we have this scene set. Esau has just been out for a hard day's graft on the hill with his father.

[52 : 21] He comes in, he's starving. And Jacob's at the cooker and he's making some of this famous red stew. And Esau, he sees dinner, he smells the dinner.

But Jacob sees an opportunity to gain advantage over his older brother. So Jacob replies in verse 31.

You can imagine him stirring the pot and all these amazing smells coming out of the kitchen. Jacob says to his starving brother, first sell me your birthright.

Luke says Esau, I'm about to die. What good is the birthright to me? Give me some of that food. food. But Jacob said, swear to me first.

So he swore an oath to him selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew.

[53 : 28] He ate and drank and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright. All for a plate of lentil stew.

Doesn't sound very appetizing to me. Dale Ralph Davis, the commentator, says Esau despised his birthright. That is how we are to look at it.

He didn't give a rip. The problem is not the conniving of Jacob, but the apathy of Esau. The writer knows where the blame belongs. Esau, says Dale Ralph Davis, was secular.

He had no interest or concern about covenant matters, about divine promises or divine privileges. That despised in verse 34 is a strong verb.

And so says Dale Ralph Davis, there have always been Esau's who have said, no thanks. I really prefer the outer darkness.

[54 : 33] So we see Esau who's been gifted with this privilege of the birthright.

and he despises it. He trades it for half a plate of lentil stew. And there's a warning here that we can apply to ourselves.

We, like Esau, are people who have been given privileges. privileges. We are offered gospel privileges. We are offered the light of Christ.

We are offered in Jesus eternal blessings. These are privileges that we are offered week by week as we gather around God's word.

There are grandchildren and parents perhaps who have sat down with us through the years and who have told us about these gospel privileges. We live in a country where there has been a legacy of gospel privileges.

[55 : 49] And the question is will we receive them by faith and devote our lives to the Lord or will we focus on this world?

Will we just have that Esau like focus of what will I eat? What will I drink? What will I wear?

What can I get from this world? Will we focus on these things and despise the privileges that are offered to us in the gospel?

There's a warning here. It's a warning for us personally. It's certainly a warning for us as a country. the gospel privileges that we have been known for as the land of the book.

And who do we look like today? We look like Esau despising them. Let's be encouraged to pray that the Lord would have mercy on us as a country.

[56 : 57] That we would see the folly of where we're at. That our eyes would be open to see these gospel privileges. That we would be given the faith and the desire to receive them.

What did Jesus say? Don't worry about what you're going to eat and drink and wear. So often that's what's filling our minds. What will I eat?

What will I drink? How do I look? These are not the things. These are the things that Esau focused on. Last point.

Just a very brief point as we finish. We're given here at the end of this passage a preview of grace. And it's just a glimpse of grace. It's a glimpse into the mysterious workings of God. Because what we see in this final section as Jacob is stirring the pot in the kitchen and Esau devours this plate of stew and then he goes off out.

[58 : 12] What we see as this section ends is that Jacob, he gets the birthright. His scheme works. Jacob, he gets the privilege.

God's blessing comes to and will travel through Jacob. we sang in Psalm 46 about the God of Jacob.

We sang in Psalm 20 about Jacob's God. And we might ask the question, but didn't Jacob just trick his brother?

The answer is yes, he did. Isn't he just a scammer? Isn't he just the kind of guy that would be sending us phishing emails today or phoning us up at the least convenient times trying to get our cash from us?

Well, it seems that that's the kind of character he was. Isn't what he did deceitful? Definitely. It was.

[59 : 18] So this portrait that we're given of Jacob, it's not a particularly attractive character that we're seeing here. And this is just the beginning.

Jacob is not a likable character, especially in the early section of this narrative. Jacob does not seem deserving of God's blessing.

So why does he receive it? God is gracious. And the answer is because God is gracious. The answer is because it's God's grace.

And grace is when God gives us the things we don't deserve. who are we?

We're little Jacobs. I'm a little Jacob. Not deserving of blessing. So how do we get God's blessing?

[60 : 38] Well, we get it through the gift of God's grace that is offered to us in and through Jesus, our Redeemer, the one who was the ultimate answer to God's promise to bless Abraham.

So let's this evening receive that grace. Rejoice in that grace. And praise the God of Jacob, our gracious God.

We'll sing to close the words of the hymn. What gift of grace is Jesus, my Redeemer? Jesus, my Redeemer, there is no more for heaven now to give.

He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom, my steadfast love, my deep and purpose, praise.
To this I own, my hope is only Jesus, for my life is holy but to live.

[62 : 33] O how strange, how divine, I can sing, all is mine, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

And it's dark, but I am not forsaken, for by my side the Savior he will sing.

I live on in weakness unrejoicing, for in my need his power is displayed.

To this I hold, my shepherd will defend me, through the deepest body he will lead.

O the night has been won, and I shall overcome, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

[63 : 38] And I dread, I know I am forgiven, the future sure, the price that has been paid, for Jesus
bled and suffered for my heart, and he was raised to overthrow the grave.

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated, Jesus now, whatever is my need.

All the chains are released, I can't sing, I am free, yet not I, but Christ in me.

In every breath, I long to follow Jesus, for he has said that he will bring me home, and day by day I
know he will redeem me, until I stand with joy before the throne.

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus, all the glory evermore to him.

[65 : 04] When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but the Christ in me.

And now may that grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of
God the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.