The Deceiver

God accomplishes His purposes despite His covenant people’s sin.

GENESIS 27:18-29

You view a social media post that promises a free getaway, noticing that it came from a friend. You click the image only to discover the free getaway has some catches. You’re required to use a specific airline and a specific booking agency. You also discover additional fees for the “free” trip. You then discover that if you share this post with others, some fees will be waived. Suddenly, you’re not nearly as interested in the trip.

*What may cause a person to intentionally deceive others? How do you typically respond after you discover you were deceived?*
Abraham died when he was 175 years old, leaving behind two sons, Ishmael and Isaac (Gen. 25:7-9). Because Ishmael was not the promised son (17:18-19), Isaac received God’s blessings (25:11), including the covenant God made with Abraham (12:1-3; 26:3-5). Isaac married Rebekah (25:20) and they had twin boys, Esau and Jacob (25:24-26). Born only seconds before Jacob, Esau was the oldest, and as a result, first in line for his father’s patriarchal blessing. But God made Jacob the patriarch instead (25:23). Although the word *patriarch* doesn’t appear in the Old Testament, the descriptive title is used in the New Testament in reference to Abraham (Heb. 7:4), the sons of Jacob (Acts 7:8-9), and David (Acts 2:29).

Isaac’s family was divided by marked favoritism. Isaac favored Esau because, like him, Esau was an outdoorsman, while Rebekah favored Jacob (Gen. 25:27-28), creating conflict and competition between the two sons. One day, when Esau came home exhausted and hungry from hunting, Jacob offered his brother a meal, only after Esau promised him the older brother’s birthright (25:29-34).

As Genesis 27 opens, Isaac was old and nearly blind (27:1-2). Before giving Esau the patriarchal blessing, Isaac asked Esau to go hunt some wild game for a meal. With Rebekah secretly listening, she quickly hatched a deceptive plan where she cooked a similar meal, dressed up Jacob to resemble Esau, and had him steal his brother’s blessing (27:1-17). Although the plan was his mother’s, Jacob eagerly went along. Being ambitious, Jacob’s only concern was that he might get caught (27:12). But because his mother agreed she would take his father’s wrath (27:13), he concluded the reward outweighed the risk.

*Observe the number of times Jacob could have stopped the deception in Genesis 27:18-27. What does this reveal about the spiritual condition of his heart?*
A deceitful son (Gen. 27:18-23)

18 He went to his father and said, “My father.” “Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?” 19 Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.” 20 Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” “The LORD your God gave me success,” he replied. 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.” 22 Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” 23 He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him.

Verses 18-20

Isaac was old, no less than one hundred (see 25:26; 26:34), and believed he was approaching death (27:1-2). But he was mistaken. He lived many more years, dying at the age of 180 (35:28).

In Old Testament times, a father’s blessing was more than an expression of love. As patriarch of the family, the father’s blessing was an official, binding transfer of the patriarchal line, along with a prayer for prosperity and superiority. Isaac’s blessing also meant the recipient and his descendants would be heirs of the covenant God originally made with Abraham (12:1-3) and extended through Isaac (26:1-5).

When Jacob went to his father, posed as Esau, Isaac sensed something was wrong. He questioned Jacob four times. With each question, Jacob could have revealed his true identity and ended the ruse, but each time, without hesitation, he answered with a lie.

Motivated by greed, Jacob deliberately lied to his father, I am Esau your firstborn. This was not the first lie of the patriarchs. Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham, lied about Sarah not being his wife (12:11-13), as had his father about Rebekah (26:7). Whenever lying becomes a way of life, it easily passes from one generation to the next. With the first lie, it became easier to lie again, just as it is for believers today.

Jacob first lied about his identity (v. 18), then he lied about his actions. I have done as you told me. He had not. Isaac hadn’t told
Jacob to do anything; he had told Esau. Nor had Jacob carried out Isaac’s instructions to Esau. The food Jacob brought his father was a domesticated goat that Rebekah had prepared (Gen. 27:14).

Isaac seemingly was suspicious, **How did you find it so quickly, my son?** Jacob then brought God into the conversation—**the LORD your God gave me success.** Note how Jacob referred to Yahweh as your God, not his own. This is the first time God is mentioned by either the father or the deceitful son in the entire chapter, and it was used blasphemously to cover a lie.

**VERSES 21-23**

Requesting Jacob to **come near** indicated Isaac’s growing suspicion. Wearing Esau’s garments (v. 15), Jacob smelled like Esau, but **the voice** sounded like Jacob. Isaac believed that if he could **touch** his arms, he could determine his true identity, since Esau was hairy and Jacob had smooth skin (v. 11). Thinking ahead, Rebekah had taken the skin of the goats and fashioned it into two tight wrappings that covered Jacob’s forearms (v. 16).

After lying about his identity, the meal, God’s help, and his appearance, Jacob deceived his father. However, the taste of victory is never as sweet when taken by deceit. Jacob had numerous opportunities to stop the lies. His calloused heart caused him only to see the end, but as we will see, it was not the end he expected.

So often, we want our Bible heroes to be flawless. But we must remember that no one has been, or is perfect, except Jesus. Only by the Lord’s grace and our commitment to integrity and transparency when dealing with others can we reach our godly potential.

**When dealing with people who don’t always act with integrity and transparency, what can believers gain by setting the example?**

**A DECEIVED FATHER** (Gen. 27:24-27)

24 “Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” he replied.
25 Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.” Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. 26 Then his father
Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son, and kiss me.” So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.

VERSE 24
Isaac still doubted. So again he asked, *Are you really my son Esau?* For a second time again, Jacob blatantly lied about his identity: *I am.* The tone of Isaac’s second question in verse 24 is different from the first question in verse 18. The first question was for information, but the second question was for validation. Isaac still doubted Jacob’s claim.

VERSE 25
Isaac instructed Jacob to bring the meal to him, indicating he was ready to eat. He referred to the meal as *your game.* The Hebrew word translated *game* could mean any meat obtained by hunting. This reflects the instructions Isaac had given earlier to Esau (vv. 3-4).

VERSES 26-27
Isaac invited his son to *come here.* The *kiss* was a customary gesture of greeting and departure. A kiss also was a formal part of the giving and receiving of a blessing. Here, it marked the end of the ceremonial meal (also a formal part of the blessing) and the beginning of the spoken blessing.

*The smell of my son* implies that Isaac’s doubts about his son’s identity had been removed. Isaac seemed convinced now that this was Esau. *The smell of a field* recalls his instructions he had given to Esau earlier in the chapter (v. 3).

How was Isaac so easily deceived? His preferential love for the older son led to his deception. He heard (v. 24), tasted (v. 25), touched (v. 26), and smelled (v. 27) what he was looking for—Esau. Because of his unrelenting favoritism, he believed because he wanted to believe.

Children should honor their parents, and parents should also love their children equally, training them in the ways of the Lord without favoritism (Eph. 6:4). Believers also must guard against favoritism in the church. The Bible repeatedly warns against showing favoritism (see 1 Tim. 5:21; Jas. 2:1). Christ died for all, and that gives all believers equal value before God (Gal. 3:28).
What are some ways favoritism is manifested in the church? What are some of the consequences that result from favoritism? How can we prevent it?

**A STOLEN BLESSING** (GEN. 27:28-29)

28 May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness— an abundance of grain and new wine. 29 May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.”

Finishing what he started in verse 23, Isaac blessed the wrong son. Most official announcements are dispatched in a monotone voice, void of passion. But handing the torch to who he thought was Esau surely was different for Isaac. This blessing would forever change the destiny of his son. Emotionally charged, he painted a beautiful future for his son, using the words **you** and **your** eight times in these two verses. Specifically, Isaac asked God to bless his son in four areas: prosperity, power, prominence, and protection.

**VERSE 28**

Living in an agricultural society, Isaac asked God to make his son’s land rich with **abundance**. Wealth and influence of that day were tied to the land, as evidenced by God giving Abraham and his descendants a land of their own, and later reinforced by David (Ps. 37:11). As the land became more productive, the blessed son’s stature would grow among his contemporaries.
Two necessary resources for an abundant harvest were dependable water and fertile earth. Only about twenty-five inches of rain falls each year in Canaan, and rainfall is restricted to a few months annually. The dew served as a year-round source of moisture.

VERSE 29
Isaac was not content with his son being a successful landowner; he wanted his son to rule over peoples and nations. Isaac’s family was surrounded by enemies who held considerable power, such as the Philistines and the Egyptians (Gen. 26:1-2). He did not want his son or his family living in fear.

For his son, Isaac asked God for authority over his brothers as the undisputed leader. The phrase translated bow down means to stoop in reverence. As the patriarch, Jacob would be both priest and chief of his people, and his word would be the final word in family matters.

With curses and blessings, Isaac called on the Lord for retribution on the enemies and forgiveness directed to the allies of his blessed son. Compare the words of Isaac with the words God used when He delivered His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). Isaac was handing down what he had received from the Lord (26:3-5)—the covenant of God—indicating that he wanted the covenantal line continued through his eldest son, Esau.

But the blessing did not go to Esau. In an act of deception, it went to Jacob. Although Jacob took what God had promised him (25:23), this deception was not God’s doing. We cannot justify using deceptive means to obtain worthy ends. Jacob orchestrated these events. Because Jacob stole the blessing, it cost him dearly.

What are the consequences of getting ahead of God?

What are the consequences of getting ahead of God? First, Jacob’s brother was so angry that he determined to kill him (27:41). Second, Jacob ended up fleeing for his life (27:43). Third, his uncle, Laban, deceived him into working fourteen years for his wife, Rachel (29:30). Fourth, his brother would become the founder of an enemy nation (32:3; 1 Sam. 14:47-48). Fifth, Jacob would be separated from his family for twenty-one years (33:1-4). Sixth, he never saw his mother again (49:31). Imagine how different life would have been if only Jacob had waited for God to work His way, in His time. The end never justifies the means.
In spite of Jacob’s deplorable actions, God was faithful to His promise. God’s promises are immutable, that is, unchangeable based on His divine wisdom. They are not reliant on our part, but on His absolute faithfulness. While Jacob’s journey could have been more enjoyable if he had waited on the Lord, God delivered on His promise, as He always does. Because Jacob did things his own way, God sent him to the school of hard knocks. Along the way, God worked on breaking Jacob’s selfishness and transforming him into a man He could bless.

**God can bring to pass His sovereign purpose despite the selfish actions of a sinful person.**

God, always faithful to His Word, prepares His people so they can be recipients of His promises. God can bring to pass His sovereign purposes despite our selfish actions. Let Jacob’s misery remind you to faithfully follow God, even when you don’t understand how God can bring His plan to fruition.

What are some examples of God’s accomplishing His purposes despite a person’s sinful conduct? What can we learn about God from those examples?

**BIBLE SKILL: Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.**

In Genesis 27:29, Isaac quoted from God’s original calling of Abraham. Read Genesis 13:14-16; 15:1-6; 17:1-8,19; 22:15-18; 26:2-5; 35:9-12. What lines from the original passage are repeated in these verses? What statements are added to the original? How does Christ fit into this promise?
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers are to act with integrity and transparency when dealing with others.
• Believers must guard against favoritism, knowing that showing favoritism leads to personal deception.
• God can bring to pass His sovereign purpose despite the selfish actions of a sinful person.

Rate your integrity and transparency on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being never and 10 being always. What steps do you need to take to move closer to always showing integrity and transparency?

What steps are you taking to protect yourself from showing favoritism? What Bible passages are you memorizing to remind yourself of the need to protect yourself from favoritism?

In what ways can your group help others examine their actions to see if they are selfish? How can your group empower people to follow God’s sovereign purpose faithfully?

Prayer Needs