

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, OT History, Lit., and Theology, Lecture 9

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This is Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in OT History, Literature and Theology lecture 9 on Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Akedah or the binding of Isaac and the beginning of the story of Jacob.

A. Quiz Preview [0:00-1:20]

Class, let's get started. For next week you are working on the book of Numbers and it's only select chapters in Numbers. Numbers is a big book there are a lot of genealogies in the early part of it. We will skip over some of the genealogies so you'll read only selected main passages. There will be an article I don't know whether it's *Our Father Abraham* and memory verses. That will be for next Thursday and the Thursday after that we'll have our first exam. Our exams are different from our quizzes. The exams are over what we talk about in the lectures and the memory verses. Don't forget about the memory verses they'll come back up, back up and back up. Do think about the lectures. There are some old study guides if you want to look those over just to prepare for that. That will be the week after next Thursday.

B. Abraham: She's my sister [1:21-6:32]

We're going to try and push through a bunch of the book of Genesis today. We're going to deal with Abraham and hopefully get out of Abraham and into Jacob and Isaac. So we want to move rather quickly. Some of the material we cover today will be rather tricky so I ask for your patience with that. You can't really discuss all sides of these things because they're complex issues. We'll start off with Abraham. There are four questions that come up in Abraham's life that I want to discuss. One of them that comes up is in chapters 12 and 20. He does it twice, he says "she's my sister." Sarah is so gorgeous and she's 75 years old, it must have been different back then. Therefore the king is going to hit on her. So "tell the king you're my sister, so he won't kill me." So that comes up. Then later

on it happens again, “say you’re my sister and spare me.” In chapter 12 it is Pharaoh and later on it’s Abimelech of the Philistines. What’s going on with this “you’re my sister” routine? It’s kind of interesting. Does everyone remember that Isaac does the same thing with Rebekah (ch. 26)? The apple doesn’t fall from the tree. You see this happen, the same story happens three times. Everyone says that it wasn’t lying because she was Abraham’s half-sister, but was it meant to deceive? I’m going to say Abraham was lying.

Why is it that everyone wants to marry the “sister”? Some people have suggested it goes back to some Near Eastern customs, when you see something happening repeatedly something that we’re not used to, suspect it may be a cultural issue. I think what you have happening here, and there are different ways to look at it, there are different sets of customs that can be applied to this passage. Dr. Gordon Hugenberger, by the way, if you get on the website for Genesis he has 48 sermons on the book of Genesis. Dr. Gordon Hugenberger, from Park Street Church, is probably one of the greatest preacher’s I’ve ever heard. He’s just incredible. He has a different take on this, but what I think is going on is you have Abimelech and Pharaoh see this guy come up with this woman. In the ancient world did a woman need a protector? Even in modern times sometimes women need protectors. What I think happened was she is a woman by herself. And what happened was that a man would see a woman by herself and come along and adopt her as a “sister.” That means he would come along and be the protector brother and what would happen was when she gets married, the protector brother gets the dowry. He protects her, she gets married, and he gets the money. So you can see how both would benefit. So when Abraham says, “she is my sister.” The king says, “Ok, this guy probably wants to get her married off, so I will take her into my harem, and then just pay this guy off.” So that’s possibly what’s going on.

Does God protect Sarah? Now I’m not saying what Sarah did was right or wrong, but probably in that culture it’s something you did to save your own life. It seems that God protected her when she went into the harem. You remember the

one king had a dream at night where God says, “If you touch her, you’re a dead man.” The guy comes out and says to Abraham, “Hey, you said this was your sister, that’s quite some sister you’ve got here buddy,” and it just goes off like that. Why would God want to protect Sarah? Who is going to have the child called Isaac and if she is messed up with the Pharaoh or Abimelech then the child wouldn’t be Abraham’s. So in both instances God protects her from that so it would be known that it’s Abraham’s child. So I think you have God stepping in there and protecting her because of the line that will be coming through Isaac.

Those are some interesting stories, this custom of adopting and protecting this sister and then marrying her off. I think this was just part of that culture, even to this day you have points at which women need protectors. But you say, women are every bit as good as men. My wife takes the car to the auto mechanic is it different than when I take it? Yes, it is, that’s just the way it is. So, anyway, you say you have a great mechanic; well, I haven’t been able to find too many mechanics like that.

C. Angelic Visit: Laws of Hospitality [6:33-13:03]

In chapter 18, there are going to be three guys that come to Abram’s house. These three guys come, and let me just work with this a little bit. Chapter 18 verse 1: “The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.” Then, what does he do? He invites the guys into his tent and washes their feet. Again is that what you did to people coming across the desert? You allowed them into your tent. These are called “Laws of Hospitality.” These Laws of Hospitality are really big in the desert.

Once upon a time, I think it was for about three nights, we stayed in a Bedouin context. It was a Bedouin tent and they had Bedouin camels. So we got to ride these camels. One night the guy went off and played this little lute thing

and the Bedouin fellow went off for about three hours telling camel jokes. I just didn't know you could do that. But this guy went off describing each one of his camels each of which had a different personality. I should say if you ever get the chance to ride a camel, horses are about this wide, and camels are about this wide. So when you ride a camel, I used to do taekwondo quite a bit, but when you try and get on one of these camels it's too big this way, so for 45 minutes you get split whether you want to be split or not. So when you get off, have you ever seen those cowboy movies where the guys are walking all bow legged? When I got off the camel after 45 minutes I couldn't straighten up my legs.

By the way camels have different personalities. Just one more story about camels and then we'll get back to the Bedouin. When you get on a camel, they're kneel down and push their tail end up, so you're on this thing and it will throw you forward like you're going to go off and then the front will pop up and you will be up. By the way when you're up on a camel are camels up there? You're up high. So I get on my camel and I've watched them before so I rock forward then I rocked backward. Well, I had this friend, well he wasn't really a friend, but he was this Southern Baptist boy and he was about 6'4 and he weighed about 350 lbs. He was a big boy. Well, I told you these camels have personalities, so this big ole' southern Baptist boy gets on the back of this camel and you're watching, and we go up, and then all of sudden he goes up and you see this camel kind of go "This guy is kind of heavy I don't want to carry him!" So this camel rolls over sideways and rolls this dude right off and then stands up straight. The camel kind of looks over as if to say, "Man, you're too big for this back!" So he rolled him and we got a big laugh out of that.

Going back to the Bedouin, they have these laws of hospitality. So the Bedouin that was there says, "So you're mortal enemy shows up at the door of your tent, the laws of hospitality in the desert, are serious. In the desert, people die from no water, but even if he is your mortal enemy, you have to feed and house your mortal enemy for three days." Now what you do is feed and house him for 3

days and then you kill him. But you have to do this Law of Hospitality for three days. So when you're in the desert you're required to do the Laws of Hospitality and required to help those that are in need. Does that make any sense as to how they work together in the desert? Hardship engenders community.

By the way, you guys know this, there was a fight in Afghanistan, it was the highest they've ever had a fight I think it was at about 10,000 or 11,000 feet. There were these navy seals up there and what happened was they were surrounded by the Taliban and they got blown out of the water. So what happened was the Taliban basically got the best of them and three of them were killed and one of them was shot to bits and he crawled into this town in northern Afghanistan. When he got there, they don't call them sheiks there, that's the Arab term, I'm not sure what the Pashtuns call them. My son calls them elders, but I don't know the Pashtun word. Anyway, they come to elders of the town, and this guy comes crawling up having been shot, and the elder comes up to see him and once he is in the town and approved by the elder to be in that town, then does that town have to protect him? That's part of their laws. The Taliban chased him down and got to the town and said, "Hey, you've got an American in there." Would the elder have fought the Taliban and destroyed half of his town to protect that guy? Yes, he would have. Once you're in their territory it's like we have to protect this guy. This guy was protected because of these Laws of Hospitality. Did he survive? Yes, he did. A student in the last class actually has the book because the guy ended up writing a book. He was shot up pretty badly and he was in Northern Afghanistan. The name of the book is *The Lone Survivor*. My point is, are the laws in Afghanistan still functioning as in Bible times? I mean it's really kind of amazing because you go back thousands of years and they're still doing things very similar, in terms of these Laws of Hospitality.

What happens here is Abraham accepts these people in, they feed them, he washes their feet, and then these guys turn to Abraham and say, "Abraham, Sarah is going to have a child." What does Sarah do? She laughs and therefore they later

name the son “Laughter” or Isaac which means “Laughter.”

D. Sodom and Lot [13:04-13:44]

The three guys are there and start looking down toward the Dead Sea. Then they wonder if they should tell Abraham what they are going to do. “Well, Abraham is going to be the father over many nations so we should probably tell him what we’re going to do.” So they say, “Ok, Abraham, we are going to go down there and smoke Sodom and Gomorrah. We’re going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.” Now what’s Abraham’s problem with that? Who’s down there in Sodom? His nephew, Lot, is down there with his kids, his nieces. So does Abraham have a problem? They’re going to go down there and blow the city out and Abraham thinks, I need to stop this for Lot’s sake.

E. Bartering with an interactive God [13:45-17:53]

So down in chapter 18 verse 20 it says, “So the Lord said, ‘The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin is so grievous, that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.’” He then turns away towards Sodom. Who jumps in their way and says, “Wait a minute, you can’t go down there and blow them out like that.” So Abraham remained standing before the Lord and asked, “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?” Do you see how Abraham is applying these things because he knows the Lord respects the righteous? So he asks, “What if there are righteous people down there? Would you smoke out or blow out these people that are down there even if there are righteous there? What if there are fifty righteous people there?” Now in that culture do they barter for things? When you’re in the old city of Jerusalem you come in and they immediately say, “Oh, my friend from America, special price for you today my friend.” Then they tell you a price three times what it’s really worth, “special price just for you.” Do you barter with the guy? You barter this guy down to half price and you go out of there thinking, “Man, I got him down to half price, I got a deal!” He’s walking away saying, “I got that guy.” But that’s the way it works, you barter for everything over

there. I've had guys, how should I say this? My wife, for example, got to ride on a camel all it cost was the guy grabbed her leg a little bit so that she could get up on the camel, that's what she had to do to get up on the camel. I had a guy offer me, I think it was 3 camels for my wife and I told him, "No, I wanted at least 5." I've also had guys try to sell me their daughters, and this is the honest truth, they tried to sell me their daughters, but it's just part of the culture. You have to roll with it. I was there for a long time, I lived there for a year and we were down in Sinai for about 3 weeks with the Bedouin, but there was bartering everywhere over there.

Abraham says, "God, if there is 50 righteous there, 50 righteous will you destroy the righteous?" God says, "Ok, I won't do this for fifty righteous." So Abraham says, "Well, what about 45?" He barter back and forth with God and finally he says, "Will you destroy the city for 10 righteous? And God says, "Okay, I won't destroy the city if you can find 10 righteous." What was Abraham's concern? Abraham's concern was Lot. Is God going to take care of Abraham's concern? Yes, but will he also take care of his concern and still smoke the city? Yes, so he gets him down to 10.

I just want to look at that interaction between Abraham and these angels and it turns out to be God himself. Is this a real interaction? Are God and these angels actually interacting with Abraham or did God know what he was going to do all along and he's just playing games with Abraham? What I want to say is that I think this is a real interaction. I think what you have here is a real human being interacting with these divine beings. So I don't think foreknowledge gets you out of this. Well, what he was going to do is what he was always going to do, but that doesn't solve the problem. I think this is a real and legitimate interaction between a human being given in this context, he bartered him down to 10. I don't think foreknowledge accounts for this I think this is a real interaction, but you have to be careful.

F. Anthropomorphic and anthropopathic Language? [17:54-21:19]

There are two terms I want to introduce to you guys. Is this just

anthropomorphic language? Now what is anthropomorphic? Does anyone know what *anthropos* means? Do I have any of my Greek students in here? *Anthropos* means “people, humans, and mankind,” that kind of thing. *Anthropos* is humankind and “morphic” is, when something morphs it what? It changes form. *Anthropomorphic* means you are portraying God in human terms. Let me just do this for you. Scripture says, “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.” Do God’s eyes have legs on them that they run to and fro throughout the whole earth? It talks about the hand of the Lord, his mighty hand and outstretched arm when you read in the book of Exodus. It uses human terms to talk about God. That’s what you call “anthropomorphic” when one uses human bodily terms when talking about God’s eyes, his mouth, and his face. There’s a person that I know that just wrote a whole book on the face of God and the presence of God, seeing God face to face.

Anthropopathic is different. *Anthropos* is humankind, you can see it again, but instead of in the form, anthropomorphic, it’s anthropopathic. That means God is portrayed with human emotions, and pathos. You’ve read enough of the Old Testament now; have you seen God get angry? Yes. Well, some say, “God doesn’t really get angry, it’s God and he doesn’t have human feelings.” I want to suggest to you that it is very likely that God has emotions. We’re portraying God in human terms, but, by the way, do we have a basis for doing that? We are made in whose image? We’re made in his image, so I would like to suggest that very likely God has emotions. Does God have the emotions of love and compassion? We see the love and compassion of God and we also see the anger of God.

Anthropomorphic means he is portrayed in human terms, like the hands of the Lord and the face of the Lord, in human physical form. Morph means “form.” Anthropopathic describes giving God human emotions like love, compassion, and anger.

In Genesis 6 it says, “and the Lord grieved because he had made man,” there was a really good comment made in this class about God wanting to destroy

all of mankind. We need to come back to that in another context. God was grieved is an anthropopathic description.

Some people want to suggest that God is not really bartering with Abraham but he is just being portrayed as doing that. It's not a real thing, God knows what he is going to do and it's not real. It's just God is portrayed in human terms. I want to suggest that it is real and that God really enters into an interaction with mankind.

G. Can a human being have impact on God? [21:20-22:13]

This raises a question: Can a human being have an impact on God? Remember we saw in Genesis 6, the sons of God marry the daughters of men and we saw *hamas*, there was violence on the earth. Did those people raise God's anger and his grief? Yes. So what I'm suggesting is that human beings can have an impact on God and that's pretty incredible to me that God allows himself to be influenced by what happens on the earth. He is actually involved with it and he actually cares. If he cares, then he is going to be involved and it is going to have an impact on him for good or for bad, for anger or for love, for kindness or whatever. I'm just raising this thing about humans' ability to impact God. It's kind of incredible when you think about it.

H. Sodom and Gomorrah: Homosexual rape [22:14-42:35]

Now, the next one is going to be more difficult, and we'll have some difficult things to discuss here. So they go down into Sodom and Gomorrah in chapter 19 then, "The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city, when he saw them he got up to meet them and he bowed down his face to the ground, 'My Lord,' he said, 'turn aside to your servant's house, you can wash your feet and spend the night, and then go on your way early in the morning.' 'No,' they said, 'We will spend the night in the square.'" Now does Lot want them to spend the night in the square? No, because Lot knows what goes on down there. So Lot pushes them and it says he insisted so strongly that they did go with him to his house. He insists, you can't stay out in

the square. So they come into his house and he prepares a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, interestingly enough.

Before they had gone to bed, every man from every part of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house. They called to Lot, “Where are these men that came into you tonight? Bring them out to us.” I’ll use the King James here: “bring them out so we can ‘know’ them.” Ok, so when the Scripture says “know” them that’s as a man knows his wife. Do you know what a euphemism is? “Eu” means good “pheme” is the Greek word for “speaks.” So a euphemism is when you say something good about something that’s not really good. So basically when they say, “Bring them out so that we may know them,” actually the NIV translates it correctly, “Bring them out so that we may have sex with them.”

This brings up this issue, which is a very difficult issue, but of course the issue really here is hospitality. These people were inhospitable to these visitors to their town, and therefore they are condemned for their inhospitality. That’s what the sin of Sodom was, this inhospitality. What I just gave you is the gay interpretation of this passage. It had nothing to do with homosexuality it had everything to do with hospitality. Now when you read that passage did you think hospitality? You say, “Yeah, they were real hospitable!” No! Is this homosexual rape basically? So what happens is these guys--well, let me just read the text here: “Where are these men that came into you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.” Lot went out to meet them and shuts the door behind him and says, “No, my friends, don’t do this wicked thing. Look I have two daughters that have never slept with a man.” How many of your remember that and just cringe? Do you just say, “Holy Cow, this guy has two daughters and he’s just going to put them out for these wolves?” “Don’t do anything to these men for they have come under my protection of my roof.” In other words, when guests came to his house, was he required to protect his guests over his own family members? That was part of the custom. Remember that guy in Afghanistan? They would have fought to the death to protect him over their own families. So this is a pretty big interesting

response here.

So he says, “you can have my daughters.” Is that a problem? What do fathers do for their daughters? Do fathers protect their daughters? You don’t mess with my daughters. You want to come and ask my daughters to marry you, you have to come and talk to the old man. When you talk to the old man, the old man sits in his chair and you’re sitting over there. The old man believes in non-verbal communication and so there is this little thing sitting behind him about this tall, has a little “cha-chink” thing on it, and it sits right behind him. And the point is, you ask me about my daughters and the non-verbal set up is there. Now, by the way, what is that meant to communicate? If you mess with my daughters do you mess with me? Yes! Do you know what a 12 gauge is? I’m serious you don’t mess with my daughters. Both my daughters are married and they both married great guys, better than I could have wished for. You just have to set up parameters. So what I’m saying is this notion of putting his daughters out there, why would he do that? Part of it would be these hospitality laws and he had to protect the guests. Is it possible, and this is just a conjecture on my part, that it would be less of a sin for them to violate his daughters, than for these men to commit a homosexual acts with these guys? Some people have suggested that. What you have here is basically homosexual rape.

Now what happens with the angels? You mess with the angels and all of a sudden these guys are blind. You can’t mess with them. Are homosexual acts sin? And what I’m wanting to go over now is, I know many of you have been trained in environments and I know the school environments today are training kids, systematically training kids from kindergarten on up that this stuff is all okay. And I want to say to you is, what I’m saying to you now, in 15 years will be considered hate speech in America. Now you say how do I know that? If I were to say what I’m going to say to you now that homosexual acts are sin, if I were to say that England it would be considered hate speech. I could be put in jail in England. It usually takes about 10 to 15 years to come over here, but it’s setting up here now.

Does the Bible have a problem with homosexuality? Well, Sodom and Gomorrah are a fairly clear statement. You say that's homosexual rape it's not two homosexual lovers. If you bounce over to some other passages. Leviticus 18:22 says this: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman." Is that fairly clear? "You don't lie with a man as one lies with a woman because that is an abomination." The next verse says, "Do not have sexual relations with animals." The Bible says that. By the way I should say, are there countries in the world today where bestiality is practiced? There are some countries and our troops have come across this on a fairly regular basis.

All I'm saying is these things are in Scripture. If you go over to Romans 1:26 this is another one of these passages. All of these passages will be interpreted in a different way obviously if a person is gay, they'll have this other interpretation of these passages. When you read them you say these passages are fairly clear, how can you miss this? In Romans chapter 1 it's talking about sin coming into the world and there is this downward spiral and God gives them up and they sin more, and then they spiral down and in verse 26 it says, "Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts, even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way men also abandoned natural relations with women and are inflamed with lust for one another. Men commit indecent acts with other men." Now is that fairly clear?

Another one that's really clear is 1 Corinthians 6:9 and it says this, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither sexual immoral sin, nor idolatry," is idolatry a sin in Scripture? Idolatry is all over the place. "Nor adultery, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders." In Corinth they had male prostitutes. Homosexual offenders are put into the category with all that, I don't want to go through the whole thing but is the Bible pretty consistent on this?

Now what do you do with folks that are gay and how should Christians react to this issue of homosexuality? I'm going to walk over here and tell you a

story and some basic things. Over the years some of my best friends, by the way, I used to teach at a really conservative school in Indiana, and one of my best friends there was a lesbian. For this class I'll call her Susie, that wasn't her real name but that's just what I'll call her. She was raped by her baseball coach when she was 12. When she was 16 her uncle took her out and violated her, and her uncle took her out and did some other stuff that you can't even talk about. She was so angry with men that after she told these stories of her life and she walked out of my office and punched the concrete block wall full force and just about busted her knuckles. She was a tough girl, very athletic, and very strong actually. So we got to be very good friends and she couldn't go home and she had mental problems so they put her in an asylum in a hospital and I would go in there to visit her and there is this guy standing there about 6 inches away screaming at her. I knew her really well, and you could just see she was about to pop this guy and take his face off. So basically I signed these papers and we got her out of there. Did she hate men? Yes, she hated men and I thought she was going to kill this guy.

So she comes over to my house and stayed with us for quite awhile. And my son comes home from the Marines and didn't know this and he was making some comments that I didn't think he should be making. And I said do you remember Susie? Susie was a lesbian so you need to think twice before you say some of that stuff. He was totally blown away. She actually came over and helped me build a concrete wall. It was the first time I ever laid block and we faced it with brick and she helped me do it. She was a really good worker. In the meantime, I had been working with concrete for 3 days and do you know what happens to your hands when you work in concrete? I have this rule: real men don't wear gloves. I know that's stupid and my wife tells me that's stupid. So I work with concrete one day and the concrete dries out your hands after one day. The second day you work with the concrete you start getting these cracks in your hands. The third day, the wounds open up and you have open sores on your hands.

Now Susie calls up and says, "I have to go to Fort Wayne for an AIDS

test.” This is when this stuff first started coming out, because you’re thinking you can’t get AIDS like that. It’s no big deal today because we can solve it. Anyway, we didn’t know back then what the deal was, and she had to go take this test. So I said, “Sure I’ll take you over there,” because no one in the school knew what was going on.

So I drove down there and I’ll never forget driving down Route 30 and we’re coming by Columbia City, about halfway to Fort Wayne I’m thinking, “Oh God, I got these open wounds on my hands, what if she comes out of this thing crying and she cries on me, and I don’t know what to do! I have four kids and a wife.” Things like that are going back and forth in my head. I was worried because I don’t know how this stuff is spread. When I get down to bottom-lines with myself and I’m really upset and don’t know what to do. I basically ask myself, and I know these sounds trivial but it’s not trivial to me, I ask myself: what would Jesus do? I know, you say, I know what Jesus would do he would say, “Be healed!” I realized if she came out and she’s crying would Jesus embrace her and allow her to cry on him? She came out of the test and she had tears in her eyes and yes the tears went on me. After about 2 or 3 weeks she got the test back and that she didn’t have it. I was as happy as she was.

She really struggled with some of this stuff. What is the Christian response to being homosexual? Is it possible to love someone like that? My bottom line is: is it possible to hate the sin and love the sinner?

Let me switch examples. Let me use my brother-in-law, I’ll call him Charlie. Charlie is a few years older than I so he had to have been in his late 40s. He had this beautiful \$30,000 truck. My brother-in-law really struggles with alcohol. He went out drinking and driving--bad move. He totals his truck, damages someone else’s car. The government is after him, so what do we do? I have this maxi-van with about 200,000 miles on it, and we go up there and put everything he owns in this maxi van and drive to our house. He stayed with us for about 6 months while he was recuperating. Question: Do we love Charlie? Do my children

love their Uncle Charlie? Yes. Question: Do I hate alcoholism?

I've said this frequently in class and I'll say it again: if alcoholism was standing right there as if it was a person, and I knew that if I killed it right in front of you that I could destroy alcoholism for everyone on the face of the planet, I would, with my bare hands, kill it right in front of you. I wouldn't care. I'd lose my job. I wouldn't care. I hate alcoholism. I hate it. I've seen it destroy. I've got a friend who's in the cemetery now because of that. I hate that stuff. Drinking and driving. Anyway, let me get off that. Alright, I hate it. I would kill it.

Question: do I love my brother-in-law? I just got to see him up in Wisconsin about two months ago. Do I love the guy? I love the guy. Question: do I hate what alcoholism has done? Yes. Is it possible then to use that same kind of thinking to ask, "Is it possible to love someone who's a gay person and hate the stuff that's in their life?" And the honest truth is, I'll never forget when she left, Grace, when she was leaving. She gave me a hug that I never think I'll forget. Now by the way, does she hate men? Yes. She hates men. She gave me a hug and then she said to me: "There are only two men in my life that I could ever trust. One was my brother and you're the other one." I'm telling you this was over two decades ago. Question: do I remember that like it was yesterday? Yes. That was one of the nicest things that anybody's ever said to me.

When she left there did she struggle for years? Is that something you just check out of like that? Now, I want to tell you, when it gets into you like that, it takes years. Now my brother-in-law, is he going to struggle with alcohol for the rest of his life? It's actually the cigarettes that are going to kill him. But what I'm saying is, I love the guy. But he smokes too much, he drinks too much. It catches up to you when you get old. But what I'm saying is, will people struggle with that? And the answer is, yes. Should the Christian community know how to love? And what I'm saying is undoubtedly in a class this size, to be honest, there are undoubtedly people who are gay in this room. Should Christians know how to love across those kind of boundaries? Now does that mean I accept that? And the

answer comes from Romans. Romans says, “love what is good and hate what is evil.” What bothers me around here sometimes is that we seem to love everything. And the Bible says, “hate what is evil.” What I’m saying is: learn how to hate what is evil. But is it possible to hate what is evil and still love the people who are watching their lives get destroyed?

I’ve got another friend who’s probably one of the brightest man I’ve ever met in my life. Knows the New Testament in Greek and is an incredible guy. His son got involved in heavy drugs and I’m talking cocaine and heroin and stuff like that. His kid was a really really bright kid. His father had to watch his kid go down the tubes? Question: would his father have died for his son? Yes. And he can’t do anything. I mean, the kid’s involved in this stuff and it’s just destroying his life. So the father loves his son, but does he hate what drugs can do to destroy a person? Seeing that, what has the father’s done, now that he’s retired? Guess what he works with? He works in a halfway house working, counseling with people that are addicted to drugs. So my thing is balance. I don’t know how you get it exactly right. But to love what is good and hate what is evil. It is important to hate what is evil and yet to still care for the people. By the way, is that what Jesus did? Yes. You say, “Well, all we have got to do is be like Jesus.” Yes, try that for a while. Being like Jesus is difficult. So this balance and this issue is difficult. Let’s get out of there. This is my bottom line actually, and I’m sorry for the pun, but this is the bottom line: loving the sinner and hating the sin. I think that if you go off only on loving the sinner and there’s no hatred for the sin, you’ve lost. If you’re only on the hatred of sin and you hate the person, then I think you’ve lost there too. So I think it takes a tension and it’s a pretty tricky tension to get right.

I. Akedah: the binding of Isaac [42:36-54:05]

Now this text is even more difficult. This is one of the most incredible texts in all the Bible. It’s Genesis chapter 22. I want to go through this text. Up until this point in the book of Genesis God comes to Abraham and God is the Great

Promiser. He comes to Abraham and every time he comes to Abraham he says, “Abraham Abraham! I’m going to give you a son. I’m going to give you many descendants, as many as stars of the heavens, as the sand of the seashore. I’m going to give you this land, this Promised Land. I’m going to make you a blessing to all the world, all the nations--the land, the seed, the blessing.” He keeps repeating that covenant promise over and over again. And he keeps telling him, “Abraham, you’re going to have a son--not Ishmael. Abraham you’re going to have a son--not Eliezer. Abraham you’re going to have a son by Sarah.” And Abraham waits until he’s an old man, he’s nearly 100 years old or whatever when he has this child. He’s waited a long time.

Now in chapter 22 God’s changes his role. God is no longer the promiser here. Now God takes a new role: he tests Abraham. So God changes his role with Abraham. He’s going to test him. Chapter 22 then, let me start off with this. It says, “Sometime later, God tested Abraham and he said to him ‘Abraham.’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. And then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, Isaac.’” He is the son of the promise, the one that you waited so long for, the one with Sarah, the special child, Isaac, Laughter. “‘You take him [the kid’s probably about 16-years-old now. So do parents get attached to their children over time? So he loves this kid.] and now take your son, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering.’” And you say, “Well, hey, we know about burnt offerings. We just started the book of Leviticus?” Yes, what’s the problem with the burnt offering? It’s usually called a whole burnt offering. When it says the whole burnt offering, usually what happens? Is the kid going to walk away from this? No. When you’re a whole burnt offering, the whole thing gets burned up. You’re fried.

“Go to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” There seems to be a specific place—“on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” Can you imagine what’s going through

Abraham's head now? God just told him to sacrifice this kid that he's waited for, that he's loved. It's got to be incredibly devastating.

What's the next verse say? It's very interesting how the text does this. This is the next verse: "Early the next morning, Abraham got up." See because if you're going to do God's will, you've got to get up early because "the early bird gets the worm." It's really important he got up early in the morning. Early in the morning, you've got to get up early in the morning. Then after he got up early in the morning, "he saddled his donkey." If you're going to go for a ride for three days to the north there, you have to saddle a donkey. You're going to ride a donkey, so you've got to saddle it. So he got up early; he saddled his donkey; and he took two servants with him. Now you need the servants because you've got to haul all this wood for the fire and you need the servants to help you out. So he's got two servants who were helping him out. He took the two servants with him and his son Isaac. "When he had cut enough wood," oh, yeah, if you're going to have a sacrifice, you need wood to burn there so that's really important too. If you're going to go sacrifice to God, you have got to bring the wood. You don't want to get caught with no wood. "So he cut the wood for the burnt offering and set out to the place that God told him."

What this proves is that Abraham's feelings don't matter. Is there any mention of Abraham's feelings here? Not one. Abraham got up early, saddled his donkey, cut the wood--no feelings whatsoever. He just obeyed God. He obeyed God, there's no place for feelings. This text does not even mention the struggle that Abraham had. It's not important. He just obeyed God. Question: is that right? No, it's not right. Is the text working you here? It's telling you about saddling the donkey. Do you care whether he saddled his donkey? He cut the wood. Do you care whether he cut the wood or not? Do you give a rip that he took two servants with him? You don't care. Is it giving you all extraneous information? Why is it doing that? It's inviting you into the text. Giving you all the space, by listing this kind of crazy stuff that doesn't have barely anything to do

with anything, and it's inviting you to ask, "Who is to supply the feelings of Abraham in this narrative?" The reader. It's calling you, as the reader, telling you all this extraneous stuff to invite you in to say, "Holy cow, what's going on in his head?" So that you can feel what Abraham feels and it's an invitation by telling you all these extraneous details. I think it's an invitation giving you the space to ask yourself: "How would you feel if God asked you to give up your son?"

So he goes down and he said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkeys while we go over and worship then we will come back." The New Testament cites this, that Abraham thought that even if he killed him, that God would raise him from the dead. Now is that pretty good not knowing anything about Jesus back in that time? Does this guy believe God? Abraham took the wood and burnt offering and he goes down and then Isaac shows up and Isaac is going to say a few words.

Now I forgot to press the buttons here but let me just tell you, this story here is called "the Akedah." In Jewish circles this is a famous passage for the Jewish people and this is called "the Akedah." The Akedah refers to "the binding of Isaac." "Akedah" means "binding." So it is the "binding of Isaac." This is the binding of Isaac passage.

This is a famous passage with so much of a struggle for a son after all this time. Now, rapid fire, there are no emotions shown. What I'm suggesting is that this is good literature. This good literature invites you into the story. You are to supply the emotions, the tensions, and the pathos of the narrative. God the Blessor turns to God the Tester. So God makes this massive shift here.

Painful obedience and what you've got, let me just read some of the rest of the story here. It says, "Abraham answered..." Let's get Isaac into this story. You can see Isaac's about 16 right? The father's how old? The father's in his hundreds, the kid's 16 right? And the kid's says, "Um, Dad like did Mom forget to tell you? Did you forgot something here Dad? Like we have got the wood and the fire all right Dad, but where's the lamb? Did Mom forget to remind you to

bring the lamb?" So Isaac here says, "Father." "Yes my son." "The fire and wood are here, but where's the lamb for the burnt offering?" "Dad, did you forget something?"

Then Abraham says, now check this out, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering." Can you hear the echo? It's a two-thousand year echo. "God himself, my son, will provide the lamb." Does God actually do it? The lamb is his son. Is anybody Baptist in here? And you go with this guy John the Baptist and what does John the Baptist say? He says, "behold the" what? "Behold, the lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world," as he announces Jesus Christ. So this passage echoes Jesus Christ. Abraham is told to offer up his son. Abraham is spared from actually going through with it. Will God actually go through with it? Now that brings up a whole lot of things.

Are any of you guys philosophers in here? Philosophers probably understand things better than I do. There's a guy called Soren Kierkegaard. He's written a book called *Fear and Trembling*. To be honest with you, I had to read the work three times before I could figure out and appreciate what he was doing, but it was one of the most profound books I've ever read. It's called *Fear and Trembling* and it's built off of this narrative. It's a real short thing, about 40/50 pages, but it's absolutely profound. A year ago I had a massive struggle with this passage.

A year ago right now my son was in Afghanistan. My son is a "boot." A "boot" means that basically he's a Marine and that means he's on the ground and that means he's got an M16. He's a Lance Corporal in the infantry. He's actually got a 50 cal machine gun and he's an on the ground kind of person. Every day he went out --and he called and told us this--every day they went outside the wire, they got shot at. His best friend took a bullet right straight through the neck. It missed by 1 mm his major artery. We have video of Hadley running to the helicopter as he was shot through the neck, putting a compress on his own neck as he's running to the helicopter. You'd have to know, this guy is totally courageous.

But he got shot through the neck. Other friends of my son didn't make it, they weren't that lucky. Sometimes the bullet went to the wrong place. Twig is dead -- one of his best friends. Other friends I don't even want to discuss. He saw it all. He saw stuff that human beings should never see in their lives. He saw it all.

I'm in Massachusetts with my Old Testament class teaching Old Testament. My son's over in Afghanistan getting shot at every day for 28 days straight he was outside the wire. He barely got any sleep because when you sleep, you never know. Just like that, these guys can be on you and so he got very little sleep. He's still not sleeping right until this day. So anyway, did I learn to pray to God? Did I have to let go of my son and say, "God, you're going to have to take care of him."

Now question: should a father protect his kid? Now you say, you don't know Elliot. He's big...he's 6'2"/6'3", 220 pounds now. He takes care of himself now. But question, they're shooting at him and I can't protect him. My kid is there and I can't protect him. I always protect my children. So I feel helpless. When you feel helpless, what do you do? You pray. Because that's all you've got. I learned a lot about prayer last year. The honest truth was that for much of the time last year, I was praying God would kill me. I just said, "God, the old man goes first. The kid's got to know, the old man goes first. God spare his life. If you're going to take somebody take me, don't take him. Spare him, I'll go. Take me, take me right now. Take me in front of an Old Testament...I don't care where you take me. Just take me, let him live."

Now it so happens that God got him back here and physically he didn't get hurt or anything like that. Is there a lot of stuff going on in his head? Yes. But anyway we're working with that now. We love and are proud of our son. What I'm saying is that feeling of helplessness and God asking and you're having to give up something like that. I learned something about this story...now that's irrelevant.

J. Stages of Faith Development [54:06-61:23]

Let me move a little closer to this and I want to talk about different stages of faith--different stages of faith development. I want to look at three of them that I've just constructed off this narrative. I want to first talk about "**easy faith.**" Do some people accept Jesus as their savior because if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved. If you believe in Lord Jesus Christ you get eternity for free. You go to heaven and walk on streets of gold. Everything's good. God changes your life. Your sins are forgiven and everything is good. You learn joy. You get joy and peace and all these wonderful things from Jesus. So I want to call this "easy faith." In other words, you accept Jesus for what you're going to get and you're going to get all of these wonderful things. I want to call that "easy faith." By the way, did some of you come to know Jesus because it was what you were going to get out of Jesus? I want to say for myself, that's probably true. This is "easy faith."

There's another level after that that I want to call "**faith of resignation.**" This is where God asks you to give up something. In my case, when I graduated from college I had a job as a systems engineer at Cornell Aeronautics Lab all set up and the guy wanted to hire me. It would've been making fifty thousand dollars, which was a lot of money back then. I realize it's not as much now but we're talking back after the Civil War when that was a lot of money. I looked at the job and I thought, "You know, I think God's calling me someplace else." I told the guy from the job, "I'm going to go to seminary." Now when you go to seminary, instead of getting fifty thousand dollars and getting wealthy, you get to seminary and you get instantly poor. Then I got married and then you get really poor. It's good being poor yourself but when you get married you have to support this other person. It gets expensive and you can't cut corners like you used to. Like riding your bike 25 miles a day through downtown Buffalo and things because now she doesn't want to ride on the back of your bike. So now you've got to actually get a car and make it work. But I looked at that and I said what? "Do I count that job

as trash?” The “faith of resignation” allows me to deprecate or to diminish, to downplay, and to think of that thing that I could have had and diminish it and say, “I didn’t want it anyway, it was no good. It wouldn’t have been good for me anyway.” It probably wouldn’t have been. So I diminish, I deprecate or devalue I put down the thing that God required of me. I devalue, or I depreciate that which God has taken from me. Paul says this, “The things that I counted gain are counted trash for me.” I don’t want them. God took them and that’s okay. When I depreciate that which God has taken it is the faith of resignation.

Is that it? That’s not Abraham. Can Abraham depreciate his son and say, “Awe, he was not much of a son anyway.” Can he do that? No. And that’s the next stage of faith that I just want to bring up here. What I want to call this unreasonable “pure faith.” This is “pure faith” where God asks you for what I want to call “the precious.” Sorry for the overtones with this but God says, “I want ‘the precious.’” Now notice I say, “the precious.” How many of these do you have? You have just one. And God says, “I want it.” When God asks you for “the precious,” can you say it doesn’t mean anything to me? I gave it up and it doesn’t mean anything, can I say that about my son? I give him up and I trust him to God. He doesn’t mean anything to me. No. Is it like you’re giving up your soul? The most important thing in your life, there’s only one of them. He asks for that one thing. You can’t deprecate it, you cannot devalue this. “Abraham, I want your son.” Absolutely devastating. Some critics look at this passage in the Bible and they say, “What a cruel God that would put somebody through this kind of playing with human beings like this!” I had a guy last semester and at the end of the semester I asked, “What did you learn in the Old Testament class?” He said, “I learned God’s cruel and likes to kill people.” Excuse me, did you read the same book I read? No, he didn’t, he missed the whole point unfortunately. So that was what he came away with—sad, really sad.

Do you really understand what’s going on here? Is God being cruel here? I don’t think so. I think there’s something else going on. This is huge for Abraham,

absolutely huge. What is Abraham's title? Abraham's called "God's friend." How do you know when you have a really, really good friend? Does a good friend know how you feel in your gut? Does a good friend know you, good, bad and ugly? Does a good friend know you inside out? Does a good friend sympathize with your hurts and pains? Will a good friend know you in sorrow? What will a good friend do? Will a good friend, when you're in grief, will they give you advice? If somebody's hurting, you give them advice right? Wrong. You grieve with those that grieve. Do you have friends that know how to grieve with you?

Now I just want to work with this with God. Is God going to go through with this sacrifice of his son? Is God going to go through with that? Question: can Abraham understand some of that now. What is it like to have to sacrifice your son? I've thought often, "What would I do if I were God and my son, Elliott, and they were beating the snot out of him and they were about to crucify him and I were God, what would I do?" You can just imagine... "Hey, you guys like atoms? Watch your atoms blown all over the universe..." Or maybe you just take your finger like this... "Oh, you guys on planet earth and you're beating my son like that? Watch this!" And you go, "flick!" and all of a sudden earth's out by like Pluto. Hey, it's a little cold out there as they're instantly frozen. What I'm saying is, if you had to watch your son beaten and put to death on a cross, what does that tell you about God? What that tells me about God is: Does God love us? He could have gone "flick!" and fried the whole place. Does he allow them to beat and massacre his son in a brutal, brutal death? Yet it just tells you the extent of God's love. I guess that's what I want to get across with this point is the extent of God's love.

K. Spatial Doubling [61:24-62:52]

Abraham then is God's friend. Abraham knows how God feels. Therefore he's his friend because God allowed him into this sacred space. Now I'll tell you something else. Notice Abraham is told to go three days journey north to a mountain called Moriah. Where is Mount Moriah? Jerusalem. Where would

Jesus die? Jerusalem. Do you get this? It's what I want to call "spatial doubling." This has happened to me once in my life. My daughter was born in Warsaw, Indiana hospital and I was at all my childrens' births. Sixteen years later, my grandson was born in that same hospital and I swear it was the same room. I was in the room and my head was bouncing back and forth between sixteen years from when she was there and when my grandson was there. I was mentally bouncing back and forth. It was the weirdest thing ever. I want to call it "spatial doubling" where the same thing happens a kind of a deja-vu thing. God takes him up to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem and that is absolutely incredible. So I think he sets the place and says, "Abraham I want you to be in the very place my son would be sacrificed 2000 years later. So go where it's going to happen in this place."

L. Jacob: strife and deception [62:53-63:55]

That's the end of that. Okay, so let's do Jacob. Jacob's a lot easier actually. I think we can relate to Jacob more. Here we have got Jacob--strife and deception. Jacob is going to be Isaac's son. Remember we have Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You've got strife and deception here. By the way, what is strife and deception built off. Jacob has how many names? Do you guys know the two names of Jacob? Jacob it's not exactly the root of this but it sounds like this notion of "deception." Strife is going to be what "Israel" means. Israel means "He who struggles with God." So Israel and Jacob, these are his two names: deception--Jacob; Israel--strife. Strife and deceptions are major themes in Jacob's life.

M. Predestination and Freewill [63:56-69:44]

So we want to jump into Jacob here. Childhood images: Jacob is born in chapter 25 of Genesis and his mother, Rebekah, is going to have two kids. It says this: "Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was barren. The Lord answered his prayer and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. And the babies jostled with each other and she said, '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 will be separated. One people will be stronger than the other and the older will serve the younger.” So right from birth, who was chosen? Jacob was chosen. That’s all that matters. Jacob is chosen. Which means then that who is not chosen? Esau. So this gets to be a question then on this thing about how God can chose one and reject the other before they were even born. Did Esau have a chance? Jacob was the one that was chosen before birth. So what do you do with all this kind of determinism.

This brings up the issue of predestination versus free will. God predestined them before they were born. Jacob would be the child of the choosing and Esau would not be. How much of it is predestination, chosen and fixed? And how much of it is free will? You should recognize in this class, have we developed right from the Garden of Eden the ability of human beings to make choices? Is that a big theme in Scripture, the ability of human beings to make choices? But here, the predestination side comes up that God chooses Jacob before he’s even born. By the way, if you jump over to Malachi chapter 1 or you could go over to Romans. Let me do Romans 9, but it’s quoting Malachi. Romans 9.13 I think it says, “So that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls -- she was told, [she, being Rebekah], ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written: ‘Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.’” Before they were even born, “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.” Did Esau stand a chance? What does that mean that God hated Esau? What’s the deal with that?

Some people take that love/hate to be kind of a comparative thing. So it’s God saying, “I love Jacob more. Esau was loved less.” So it was a more or less kind of thing. It didn’t mean absolute “hate,” it was just “more”--a relative thing. I think probably a better way to explain that is working with the covenantal terminology. “To love” someone meant “to choose” them; “to hate” meant “not to choose them.” So the love/hate terminology is terminology of the covenant. God makes a covenant with the one, he does not make a covenant with the other. So this is a big debate and we should say if a person is not chosen then, are they still

responsible? Was Esau responsible? What should Esau have done? Now does Esau turn into a really profane person? Is it possible that Esau could have said, “Jacob is the chosen one” and chose to get under Jacob and support him in his role? Is that possible? Does anybody remember there’s a guy named Moses in Exodus? Who is Moses’ older brother? Aaron. Who is his older sister? Miriam. So Miriam and Aaron are older, but who is the one that is chosen by God to lead Israel? Moses. Do Aaron and Miriam have to get under to support Moses? Is that what they do? Except in Numbers 12, there’s some controversy, but most of the time that’s what they do. They get under him. Is that what Esau should’ve done? He should have come out in support of Jacob. Now does Esau do that or does Esau want to kill his brother? So we get into tension there. What I want to suggest is that Esau still made choices. He still had choices of how he was going to respond to this. So a person who is not chosen is still responsible. Is that fair? Yes, that’s fair. God chooses...by the way, is life fair?

My son really struggles with this at a certain level. What would have happened if he had been born in Afghanistan? Would his life have been totally, absolutely different from being born in America and having his old man be a professor. By the way, are all of your lives different? Is life fair? Is everybody in this class on exactly the same playing field or do all of you come from different backgrounds with some pluses and minuses in various areas? Yes, we’re all different. This idea of everything has got to be level on the playing field of life is crazy. Is life fair? No, that’s just the way it is. I was born to a poor family. My brothers and sisters barely went to college at all. We didn’t have the money, we didn’t have the provisions. Other kids, they all went off to college. We have different families, you got to work with that.

N. Names and birth of Jacob and Esau [69:45-71:45]

So, now, here are the two boys' names. I want to work on this a little bit. Jacob's name has the sound of, it's not etymologically connected necessarily, but the sound is that his name means "heel." "Jacob" also sounds like "deceiver." The name sounds like "deceiver" and "heel-grabber." When they're born, when they came out, Esau came out all what? Red and hairy and Jacob came out grabbing the heel of his brother. So they called him basically an echo of this term "heel" that is Jacob and later that term also connected with "deceiver." Esau comes out and he's all red. Red red, they call me "Red." His name is "Big Red." Basically, Esau is "Big Red." Esau's descendants become the Edomites. The "dm" in Hebrew means "red." So Edom will be associated with red. By the way, what are the color of the rocks in the country of Edom? Has anybody ever seen the picture of Petra? They're red. It's red Nubian sandstone. So the place where he comes to dwell is red sandstone in the land of Edom.

Then, by the way, now this is just me being kind of funny, but not really. Every time you see the Edomites in Scripture, what will the Edomites, Esau's descendants, do almost every time? They'll kill Jews. The Edomites kill Jews. That's what they do. So there's always going to be this tension with the Jews. They're going to kill a lot of Jews. They're Esau's descendants. Esau or "Seir" as he's called. "Seir" means "hairy." So basically we've got one kid named Harry (hairy) or Big Red. That's his name. By the way we still name people Harry today, spelled with two "r's." But his name is "Harry" because he was all hairy from the start. And so Big Red is there.

O. Jacob and Esau and the Red Stew birthright [71:46-73:11]

In chapter 25 here at the end, let me just narrate this story. So Esau is out hunting. He's a hunter. Jacob is a man of the field. Jacob's got some stew. What color was the stew by the way? Red stew. Do you get the play on "red" here? Red stew for Big Red. So Big Red comes in and he's starving. He's been out hunting and doesn't have food. He comes in to Jacob and Jacob's got this red stew. "Hey, Red, do you want some red stew?" Red [Esau] says, "I'm going to

starve. What good's my birthright?" So basically Jacob barter for the birthright. Jacob says, "You give me the birthright and I'll give you the stew." Esau says, "I'm going to die if I don't get that stew so who cares about the birthright?" He doesn't. By the way, was that legitimate to barter for the birthright? And the answer is: yes. We know that now from those Nuzu laws. We've actually got laws that say that it's absolutely legal to barter for your birthright. They barter for everything and your birthright can be bartered for. Just because it was legal, does that mean it was nice? Was Jacob being nice to his brother when he had no food? So I want to say, it's legal. We know it's legal, but we're saying we're not sure that it was the nicest thing to do with Esau.

P. Jacob's lying to Isaac [73:12-77:7]

Now the deception of Isaac, what happens here? There's a really nasty verse in chapter 25 verse 28. Check this out: "Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau. But Rebekah loved Jacob." What happens when the father loves one child and the mother loves the other child. Parental favoritism leads to what? Sibling rivalry. So you get these siblings clashing. When parents favor one kid over another, you're going to have warfare among the kids. So this is the problem of parental favoritism -- the father loves Esau, the mother loves Jacob. Now there's going to be a major problem here.

Now what happens? Isaac's old. He's blind. He can't see. He calls in his son Esau and he says, "Esau, I just want the best steak ever. And so go out and shoot the animal and bring it back and cook it just the way I love it. Then when you bring it back I will bless you." Esau goes trucking out with his bow and arrow and he's going to go out and get this animal. Who overhears the telephone call? Rebekah's there, she overhears the whole thing. She schemes, "Hey, Jacob, we've got to make a move now. Your father's blind." Do you take advantage of blind people? Of course. "Dad can't see you and so you're going to go in there." But what's the problem? Dad can't see you but Harry is what? Harry is hairy. So Jacob says, "I don't think so." So the mother says, "Okay, get me a goat, we'll

cook the goat up.” By the way, I should say this too. Do you know that goats in Palestine, if you ever touch the back of those goats you get splinters in your hands? The goats’ hair is so wiry and thick, there is no human being on the face of the earth that has hair that thick and wiry. So it’s not the backside of these goats. It’s really nasty hair. On the underside of the goats, in their armpits and the underside, it is really fine hair almost like soft leather. So that’s what she must have stripped out and put on him. So she puts it on him.

Jacob says, “Here I am with the food, dad!” And all of a sudden it’s like, “Hey, his voice sounds like someone else.” He calls him in there. What’s he do? Does he grab Jacob, neck and hands? And he says, “Oh, the guy’s hairy, must be Harry.” So he eats the food. He blesses Jacob and gives him all the blessings. Then Jacob trots out and then who trots in next? Esau comes in and “Here I am, your son Esau, whom you love.” Then the father freaks out realizing he’s been tricked. So the father’s been tricked at this point and you get this tension then that’s going to be between Jacob and Esau. Who gets the blessing?

Did the father realize that he had done wrong? Esau says, “What’s the matter Dad, have you only got one blessing?” Isaac said, “I blessed Jacob and he will be blessed.” I think Isaac realized that he should’ve blessed Jacob because that’s what God’s promise was. By the way, does God use all this trickery and evil to accomplish his purposes? God uses even human evil to accomplish his purposes.

There’s going to be a conflict next and next time we’ll look at this conflict of what happened with this Jacob and Esau struggle over this blessing of the father. Have some of you felt the blessing of your father? Let me just end there. Is the blessing of father important to you? I had to wait until I was about 42-years-old until I felt the blessing of my father. I just want to say that some of you know what that means to have the blessing of your father. It’s beautiful thing. So we’ll treat Jacob and Esau next. We’ll see you next time. Start working on Numbers.

This is Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in OT History, Literature and Theology lecture 9 on Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Akedah or the binding of Isaac and the beginning of the story of Jacob.

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