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Prison Ministry

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **11: The Marriage of Isaac**

 THE Canaanites were idolaters, and the Lord had commanded that His people should not intermarry with them, lest they should be led into idolatry. Abraham was old, and he expected soon to die. Isaac was yet unmarried. Abraham was afraid of the corrupting influence surrounding Isaac, and was anxious to have a wife selected for him who would not lead him from God. He committed this matter to his faithful, experienced servant, who ruled over all that he had.

 Abraham required his servant to make a solemn oath before the Lord that he would not take a wife for Isaac of the Canaanites, but that he would go unto Abraham's kindred, who believed in the true God, and select a wife for Isaac. He charged him to beware and not take Isaac to the country from which he came, for they were nearly all affected with idolatry. If he could not find a wife for Isaac who would leave her kindred and come where he was, then he should be clear of the oath which he had made.

 This important matter was not left with Isaac, for him to select for himself, independent of his father. Abraham told his servant that God would send His angel before him to direct him in his choice. The servant to whom this mission was entrusted started on his long journey. As he entered the city where

Abraham's kindred dwelt, he prayed earnestly to God to direct him in his choice of a wife for Isaac. He asked that certain evidence might be given him, that he should not err in the matter. He rested by a well, which was a place of the greatest gathering. Here he particularly noticed the engaging manners and courteous conduct of Rebekah, and all the evidence he had asked of God he received that Rebekah was the one whom God had been pleased to select to become Isaac's wife. She invited the servant to her father's house. He then related to Rebekah's father and her brother the evidence he had received from the Lord that Rebekah should become the wife of his master's son Isaac.

 Abraham's servant then said to them, "And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left." The father and brother answered, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee; take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken. And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshiped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth."

 After all had been arranged, the consent of the father and brother had been obtained, then Rebekah was consulted, whether she would go with the servant of Abraham a great distance from her father's family, to become the wife of Isaac. She believed from the circumstances that had taken place that God's hand had selected her to be Isaac's wife, "and she said, I will go."

 Marriage contracts were then generally made by the parents; yet no compulsion was used to make them marry those they could not love. But the children had confidence in the judgment of their parents, and followed their counsel, and bestowed their affections upon those whom their God-fearing, experienced parents chose for them. It was considered a crime to follow a course contrary to this.

**An Example of Filial Obedience**

 Isaac had been trained in the fear of God to a life of obedience. And when he was forty years old he submitted to have the God-fearing, experienced servant of his father choose for him. He believed that God would direct in regard to his obtaining a wife.

 Isaac's case is left on record as an example for children to imitate in aftergenerations, especially those who profess to fear God.

 The course which Abraham pursued in the education of Isaac, that caused him to love a life of noble obedience, is recorded for the benefit of parents, and should lead them to command their households after them. They should instruct their children to yield to, and respect, their authority. And they should feel that a responsibility rests upon them to guide the affections of their children, that they may be placed upon persons who their judgment would teach them would be suitable companions for their sons and their daughters.

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **12: Jacob and Esau**

GOD knows the end from the beginning. He knew, before the birth of Jacob and Esau, just what characters they would both develop. He knew that Esau would not have a heart to obey Him. He answered the troubled prayer of Rebekah and informed her that she would have two children, and the elder should serve the younger. He presented the future history of her two sons before her, that they would be two nations, the one greater than the other, and the elder should serve the younger. The first-born was entitled to peculiar advantages and special privileges, which belonged to no other members of the family.

 Isaac loved Esau better than Jacob, because Esau provided him venison. He was pleased with his bold, courageous spirit manifested in hunting wild beasts. Jacob was the favorite son of his mother, because his disposition was mild and better calculated to make his mother happy. Jacob had learned from his mother what God had taught her, that the elder should serve the younger, and his youthful reasoning led him to conclude that this promise could not be fulfilled while Esau had the privileges which were conferred on the first-born. And when Esau came in from the field, faint with hunger, Jacob improved the opportunity to turn Esau's necessity to his own advantage, and proposed to feed him with pottage if he would renounce all claim to his birthright, and Esau sold his birthright to Jacob.

 Esau took two idolatrous wives, which was a great grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Notwithstanding this, Isaac loved Esau better than Jacob. And when he thought that he was about to die he requested Esau to prepare him meat, that he might bless him before he died. Esau did not tell his father that he had sold his birthright to Jacob and confirmed it with an oath. Rebekah heard the words of Isaac, and she remembered the words of the Lord, "The elder shall serve the younger," and she knew that Esau had lightly regarded his birthright and sold it to Jacob. She persuaded Jacob to deceive his father and by fraud receive the blessing of his father, which she thought could not be obtained in any other way. Jacob was at first unwilling to practice this deception, but finally consented to his mother's plans.

 Rebekah was acquainted with Isaac's partiality for Esau, and was satisfied that reasoning would not change his purpose. Instead of trusting in God, the Disposer of events, she manifested her lack of faith by persuading Jacob to deceive his father. Jacob's course in this was not approbated by God. Rebekah and Jacob should have waited for God to bring about His own purposes in His own way, and in His own time, instead of trying to bring about the foretold events by the aid of deception.

 If Esau had received the blessing of his father, which was bestowed upon the first-born, his prosperity could have come from God alone; and He would have blessed him with prosperity, or brought upon him adversity, according to his course of action. If he should love and reverence God, like righteous Abel, he would be accepted and blessed of God. If, like wicked Cain, he had no respect for God nor for His commandments, but followed his own corrupt course, he would not receive a blessing from God but would be rejected of God, as was Cain. If Jacob's course should be righteous, if he should love and fear God, he would be blessed of God, and the prospering hand of God would be with him, even if he did not obtain the blessings and privileges generally bestowed upon the first-born.

**Jacob's Years of Exile**

 Rebekah repented in bitterness for the wrong counsel which she gave to Jacob, for it was the means of separating him from her forever. He was compelled to flee for his life from the wrath of Esau, and his mother never saw his face again. Isaac lived many years after he gave Jacob the blessing, and was convinced, by the course of Esau and Jacob, that the blessing rightly belonged to Jacob. {SR 89.1}

 Jacob was not happy in his marriage relation, although his wives were sisters. He formed the marriage contract with Laban for his daughter Rachel, whom he loved. After he had served seven years for Rachel, Laban deceived him and gave him Leah. When Jacob realized the deception that had been practiced upon him, and that Leah had acted her part in deceiving him, he could not love Leah. Laban wished to retain the faithful services of Jacob a greater length of time, therefore deceived him by giving him Leah, instead of Rachel. Jacob reproved Laban for thus trifling with his affections, in giving him Leah, whom he had not loved. Laban entreated Jacob not to put away Leah, for this was considered a great disgrace, not only to the wife, but to the whole family. Jacob was placed in a most trying position, but he decided to still retain Leah, and also marry her sister. Leah was loved in a much less degree than Rachel.

 Laban was selfish in his dealings with Jacob. He thought only of advantaging himself by the faithful labors of Jacob. He would have left the artful Laban long before, but he was afraid of encountering Esau. He heard the complaint of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before."

 Jacob was distressed. He knew not which way to turn. He carried his case to God and interceded for direction from Him. The Lord mercifully answered his distressed prayer. "And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

 "And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me." Jacob related to them the dream given him of God, to leave Laban and go unto his kindred. Rachel and Leah expressed their dissatisfaction of their father's proceedings. As Jacob rehearsed his wrongs to them and proposed to leave Laban, Rachel and Leah said to Jacob, "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's; now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do."

**The Return to Canaan**

 In the absence of Laban, Jacob took his family and all that he had, and left Laban. After he had pursued his journey three days, Laban learned that he had left him, and he was very angry. And he pursued after him, determined to bring him back by force. But the Lord had pity upon Jacob, and as Laban was about to overtake him, gave him a dream not to speak good or bad to Jacob. That is, he should not force him to return, or urge him by flattering inducements.

 When Laban met Jacob he inquired why he had stolen away unawares and carried away his daughters as captives taken with the sword. Laban told him, "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad." Jacob then rehearsed to Laban the ungenerous course he had pursued toward him, that he had only studied his own advantage. He appealed to Laban as to the uprightness of his conduct while with him, and said, "That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes."

 Jacob said, "Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight."

 Laban then assured Jacob that he had an interest for his daughters and their children, that he could not harm them. He proposed to make a covenant between them. And Laban said, "Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap."

 And Laban said, "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters; no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee."

 Jacob made a solemn covenant before the Lord that he would not take other wives. "And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swear by the fear of his father Isaac." {SR 92.3}

 As Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. And when he saw them, he said, "This is God's host." He saw the angels of God in a dream, encamping around about him. Jacob sent a humble, conciliatory message to his brother Esau. "And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

 "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

Next Mailing: Story of Redemption Chapter **13: Jacob and the Angel**