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SERMON TITLE: **Courage to Change: The Serenity Prayer, Pt. 2**
SCRIPTURE: **Genesis 27:1-36**
DATE **September 18, 2022**
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live

Read also Genesis 25:20-34

Do you recall the Serenity Prayer? Last week we talked about the first part of it:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

We talked about things that happen in our lives that we cannot change. We talked about recognizing that God still works to recover our losses, even when a tragedy cannot be changed. Jesus says, "The gates of hell cannot prevail against my church." That's you!

The serenity prayer does not stop there. There is not a period; there's a comma:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

Then the next line follows:

*Courage to change the things which **should** be changed,*

Some of you probably think that's wrong. It should be "the things which **can** be changed." I am going to challenge your thinking this morning! The word "should" is actually used in the original prayer.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things which **should** be changed,
And the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.*

It is easy to change what **can** be changed. But changing what **should** be changed requires high aspirations. Christians are called to change what should be changed.

And that takes courage.

Today we continue the story of Rebekah the wife whom Abraham's servant found for Isaac. It was SUCCESS BY FAITH! If you missed it, read Genesis 24.

Rebekah lived in Ur, with Abraham's extended family and thus, was a woman of faith. She was not from the surrounding pagan nations. Rebekah left her homeland to become Isaac's wife because her father recognized that "this thing comes from the Lord." (Gen 24:50) **By faith** she left home to follow the Lord's call.

It takes faith to leave your familiar surroundings.

Faith was evident in this family. When she could not conceive, Isaac prayed for her. The answer came twenty-years-later. (Gen

25:19, 26) The tremendous struggle in her womb compelled her to again seek the Lord. The Lord spoke to her.

This is an **act of faith**. God explained the real issue: they were two nations; they would be rivals; *the older would serve the younger*.

Rebekah knew things no one else knew because of her faith.

Do you seek God's help with your life circumstances? When you have a problem, do you enact the "privileges of faith?" Prayer is a privilege of faith.

Do you expect an answer? Do you believe God will help you? He will! You have more guidance than you know! AND, the gates of hell will not prevail against you. That is a promise!

Sure enough, when the time came, there were twins. God's words were true.

Don't you know she thought about that when she looked at those babies?

- They are two nations;
- rivals from the beginning.
- The older will serve the younger.

That Word from God was in her heart.

For the older to be second was culturally inappropriate. The culture was deep-rooted in the rights of the firstborn. The firstborn was the family's domestic priest, the head of household, and received a double portion of the inheritance.

How in the world would God's will happen that it would be the younger child?

Rebekah saw it when Esau despised his birthright by selling it to Jacob for a meal. (Gen 25:33). Esau married pagan women, as prohibited by Grandfather Abraham. His wives made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah. (Gen 26:34-35)

Rebekah observed all this. She had not forgotten God's words.

Fast forward to Isaac who is about to die and it is time for the "Last Will and Testament," which they called "The Blessing." Let's hear it. READ Genesis 27:1-36

Let's lay out what is going on:

- Two sons, but only one blessing, and a rigid cultural protocol for blessing;

- The older son was in line for the birthright, but he valued a bowl of stew more than his spiritual legacy;
- The older son did not identify with his family of faith but married a pagan;
- The younger son greatly sought the blessing, but he pursued it deceitfully

What did this woman of faith do? She came up with a devious scheme. She had learned as a woman in that culture, she had to be creative. The man is the head but the woman is the neck that turns the head any way she wants!

This crazy plan could have failed at any point. It was a far-out, fantastic scheme, but the outcome was God's will that she had heard many years ago.

Rebekah was trying to change what SHOULD have been changed.

What if she had not done anything?

So she set up this scheme, and her younger son went along with it. Like mother, like son.

Is this right? We are free to ask this question. Not every decision of people in the Bible is right. But you will notice, in all our attempts, both good and bad, something else is at work. That is the case here. There was something else at work.

It reflects this prayer:

*Have the courage to change the things which **should** be changed.*

The oldest son Esau valued his own desires over the blessings of the family.

- He sold his birthright to satisfy his physical hunger
- He disobeyed his parents and grandparents regarding whom to marry
- His third marriage to Ishmael's daughter was to gain Isaac's blessing, not God's
- Esau hated Jacob for stealing his blessing and planned to kill him (Gen 27:41)

The outcome was that Jacob had to flee from his brother and he never saw his mother again. He lived with Abraham's people in Ur, which pleased the Lord.

It is a messy, messy story, but God used Rebekah's actions to accomplish exactly what God had planned.

So, here we are, and God's blessing carries through the second son: Abraham, Isaac, and *Jacob*. This is just as God had said it would.

What if Rebekah did not try to change the things which should be changed? We might understand her actions, although deceit is NOT part of the fruit of the Spirit!

Paul interprets this story in Romans 9:7b-16:

God said to Abraham, "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you." This means that it is

not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants. . . . Something similar happened to Rebecca when she had conceived children by . . . Isaac. Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose of election might continue, not by works but by his call) she was told, "The elder shall serve the younger." . . . What then are we to say? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy.

God is not bound by the world's cultural norms but is driven by mercy. God called *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

When you make decisions in your everyday life, do you have the courage to change what should be changed?

Perhaps God will move you to action. And you will accomplish something extremely important.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things which should be changed,
And the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.*

It will make a huge difference.

AMEN