

# The InnerCHANGE

Online Edition for the Cross Point Community



Title: Divided

Date: 6.6.06

Series: Forefathers

Text: Gen 27:1-40

Synopsis: Anyone who has spent any time in church has heard the narrative of Jacob and Esau. It appears on flannel graphs, in children's storybooks and in videos. And the story is a good one. Two chapters prior, Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob for some lentil stew. But since the duty of establishing the primogeniture is that of the father, Jacob still needs his father Isaac's blessing to complete the transaction. Rebekah, Isaac's wife and the mother of Jacob and Esau, hears of Isaac's plan to secretly bless Esau, thus thwarting the deal made between the two brothers as well as the divine oracle of God given to Rebekah that the older brother Esau would serve the younger brother Jacob. Trickery is met with trickery and Jacob and Rebekah develop an elaborate ruse to trick blind Isaac into blessing Jacob instead of Esau. Upon the success of their plan, Isaac blesses Jacob, infuriating Esau who promises to kill Jacob, who subsequently flees for his life, not returning for twenty years.

In addition to being a good story, this narrative contains a lot of theology. The Prophet Malachi uses this story to describe God's deep and enduring love for the nation of Israel. The Apostle Paul uses this story to demonstrate the way in which God calls individuals to faith. The writer of Hebrews uses this story to encourage believers to persevere in that faith, not despising God's blessing as Esau did. This is all great theology.

But at the heart of this narrative is a simple yet sad story. A story that is all too common. It is the story of a divided family filled with deeply flawed people who act selfishly and with little regard towards one another. Sound familiar? Yet in spite of all the flaws and failures, God's grace prevails and his loving, redemptive plan for humanity continues, bringing hope to the patriarchal family, and hope to each of us.