

XLV. Genesis in Biblical Perspective

The Gospel of Christ from Genesis

“Now, How Did I Get Blessed?”

Genesis 27

By: Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

Let's look in Genesis 27. This is the Word of God. It's the truth. Genesis 27:1–4 says [1] *When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.” [2] He said, “Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. [3] Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, [4] and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Prayer:

Father, may the meditations of our heart and the words of my mouth be acceptable in Your sight, in the name of Christ our Redeemer, Amen.

We are looking at Christ alone in the book of Genesis and how He challenges us with the Gospel. Genesis 27 will communicate something to us. One of the things I love about the Bible is it is honest about everything including our heroes of the faith. It is painfully, provocatively and sometimes like this passage embarrassingly honest. There is no way that someone would write a “Father Knows Best” episode from this chapter. The father will be turned into a buffoon, although God has a very significant work for him in this chapter. Have you heard of the show “Leave it to Beaver”? The beaver is nothing compared to Jacob.

There are four people I want to look at as we walk our way through this passage. There is Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau. This is a passage that unfolds in five scenes. When we get to the end of this God will get His purposes done, not only through his friends but even when his friends act as his adversaries. Not only will he overcome his enemies but sometimes he has to overcome his friends when they start acting as if they're his adversaries, but God's sovereign grace is sufficient. I'm glad God is sovereign. I'm sure glad He is not limited by us but we can be changed by Him. Even when God uses us in spite of our sins, changes us and accomplishes His purposes, sin still has consequences. I can be forgiven. I can be cleansed. I need to be changed but it has consequences.

Genesis 27:1–4 is scene one. Here we find Isaac establishing a plan. We are in the book that is on the generations of Isaac. Before I explain Genesis 27:1–4, I'd like to look back at Genesis 25 for this is where the beginning of the book of Isaac starts. Genesis 25:21–28 says [21] *And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. [22] The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. [23] And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.” [24] When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. [25] The first came*

out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. [26] Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. [27] When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. [28] Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

The next part of the passages is where Esau is dominated by his appetite, like his father Isaac was and one day came in famished. Jacob exchanged his birthright by telling Esau he would give him soup if Esau would give him his birthright. Esau basically gives up his birthright because at the time he'd rather have the soup than the birthright. Now we fast forward 40 years up to Genesis 27. Here we find a plot being hatched by Isaac. Isaac is going to give a blessing to Esau which will be the family blessing.

In the Bible there were three blessings that happened to a child – birthright blessings, family blessings and covenant blessings. The covenant blessings will be given in Genesis 28, but now we're at the family blessing and Jacob has already gotten a hold of the birthright. The birthright was the right to the money. The family blessing was the right to being the next patriarch of the family, the leadership of the family. The covenant blessing was the redemptive work of God through the family. So Jacob has the birthright when Esau exchanged it with him to get his appetite filled for soup. Isaac wants to make sure Esau gets the family blessing. Now the family blessing it actually supposed to go to Jacob according to what was said to Rebekah at their birth when the older is to serve the younger. The younger will end up more powerful than the older.

Isaac doesn't want that to happen so he gets Esau in and they hatch a plot. Isaac's plot is that he is not going to give a public blessing. By the way, there are five times that blessings are given in the Old Testament and generally when they're given they are given in public settings with all the children present but this one is going to be done privately. He has a surreptitious reason. He is working something clandestine and that is he will circumvent God's blessing by giving it to Esau when God said it was for Jacob. He is doing this because he loves Esau because Esau is a hunter.

Isaac is 100 years old in this passage. He is not about to die but he's obviously infirmed. His senses are dulled and his eyesight is almost totally gone but he is not going to die. He may feel like he is going to die but he's actually going to live another 80 years. He won't die until he is 180 years old. He will even see Joseph, his grandson, sold into slavery. He won't die until ten years after Joseph is sold into slavery and ten years before Jacob his son takes the family off into Egyptian captivity. But right now he thinks he is about to die. So in thinking he is about to die he thinks he'll get this blessing to Esau but somebody was listening when he was talking to Esau about this.

The second scene is a counter ploy by Rebekah. Genesis 27:5–13 says [5] *Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, [6] Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, [7] 'Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the LORD before I die.'* [8] *Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. [9] Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves. (Rebekah knows Isaac is a man of appetites and that she can get him through his appetites.) [10] And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies."* [11] *But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man,*

and I am a smooth man. [12] Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing.” [13] His mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me.”

There is a plot by Isaac where he draws Esau into it. Now there is a counterplot by Rebekah and unabashedly Rebekah and Jacob decide they are going to take advantage of the feebleness and blindness of Isaac to trick him. She tells Jacob to go get some goats and she'll make them taste like wild game. We'll put Esau's cloaks on you and so she comes up with this unbelievably thought out scheme. Jacob realizes this may not work and he may get cursed because of it. What might be in Jacob's mind here? Noah had a son who mocked him and his name was Ham. He didn't get a blessing but he got a curse. That message might have been in the back of his mind here. Jacob isn't objecting because he all of sudden has ethical concerns. He just thinks it may not work and he doesn't want to get caught. Rebekah basically tells him not to worry because if it doesn't work she'll take the curse for him. Jacob then goes along with it.

Isn't it interesting that the man who wrestles with God in just a couple of verses from now is pinned to the mat by his mother right here. It doesn't take much for her to do this. He agrees and submits to her. So he goes off to get the young goats and to accomplish the dastardly deed of the scheme of the counterplot to mock Isaac and his feebleness. Let's go to the third scene. In this scene the plot is hatched.

Genesis 17:14–29 says [14] So he went and took them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved. [15] Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. [16] And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. [17] And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

[18] So he went in to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” [19] Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.” [20] But Isaac said to his son, “How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?” He answered, “Because the LORD your God granted me success.” [21] Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not.” [22] So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, “The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” [23] And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him. [24] He said, “Are you really my son Esau?” He answered, “I am.” [25] Then he said, “Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you.” So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.

[26] Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come near and kiss me, my son.” [27] So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, “See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed! [28] May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. [29] Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!”

Rebekah must be a good cook to make young goat taste like wild game, like good old food. She takes goats and makes them taste like venison and that's some kind of

cooking right there. She knows just what to do to it for Isaac to like it. Then she had Jacob put the skin of the goats on his arms and neck so that Isaac would think it was Esau. Then she dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes. Jacob goes into serve Isaac the food. There are three lies given. First of all Isaac says "Are you my son?" obviously referring to his first born. Jacob lying says "I am your son Esau, your firstborn. I brought the game for you to eat." The next question from Isaac was "How did you get it so quickly?" Jacob lying again says "The Lord *your* God granted me success." I believe at this point Jacob is an unconverted man. Then here is the third lie. Isaac said "Are you sure you are Esau?" Jacob said "I am." Jacob not only told three lies but you can add blasphemy, the use of God's Name in vain. "The Lord *your* God blessed me." Not only did he reveal that he didn't know the Lord personally but he also revealed he had no reverence for the Lord and the use of the Lord's Name to further his lie and deception.

There are five tests that Isaac puts on this thing. First was the test of logic. "How did you get this game so quickly?" The second test was the test of confession/integrity. "Are you my son?" The third test was the test of voice as he listened to his voice. Can't you just imagine Jacob trying to sound like Esau? Isaac says "You sure sound like Jacob." Then came the test of touch as he touched him to see if he felt like Esau. Then finally came the test of smell. Isaac with his feeble senses, particularly his blindness is not able to ascertain through the lie.

When they were born Esau came out first with Jacob grabbing Esau's heel as they were coming out. Now it's reversed as Jacob goes in first to Isaac and Esau comes in right behind him. Now what happens? Let's look further in the text. Here is the fourth scene. It's the response of Esau to the situation.

Genesis 27:30–40 says [30] *As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting. [31] He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me."* [32] *His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau."* [33] *Then Isaac **trembled very violently** and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed."* [34] *As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"* [35] *But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing."* [36] *Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob (deceiver)? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing."* Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" [37] *Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?"* [38] *Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father."* And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

[39] *Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high. [40] By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck."*

Here Esau calls for a blessing but there is none. Isaac said in Genesis 27:3–4 *[3] Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, [4] and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that **my soul may bless you** before I die.*” This was a soul matter to Isaac to thwart God’s purpose and bless his favorite son, Esau. It was such a matter of his soul that he framed the blessing for what he thought was Esau but was Jacob, so that there was no other blessing. So Esau ends up weeping in bitterness, being a victim. He doesn’t blame his appetites or his father’s appetites but he blames Jacob and plays the victim. He calls upon Isaac for any blessing but Isaac’s blessing was not a blessing but an anti-blessing. It confirmed Jacob’s blessing. It is the ascendancy of Jacob and Isaac says “I can’t change the blessing with a blessing for you. I can only confirm it.” He shook violently while he did it. Here is the last scene.

Genesis 27:41–45 says *[41] Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” [42] But the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son and said to him, “Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. [43] Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran [44] and stay with him a while (in Hebrew, a couple of days), until your brother’s fury turns away—[45] until your brother’s anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?”*

Here we see sin’s consequences. A family is broken and it will never be put back together again. There is hatred, anger, bitterness which spoils many, violence and brokenness in this home. God’s promise got to Jacob but here we see the inevitable consequences of sin within a home and even within the lives of God’s people. God gets His purposes done but our sins have consequences.

I’d like to give you three takeaways from this text. The first one is the sovereign grace of God will ensure that the purposes of God will be accomplished in spite of the people of God, His enemies or even His friends. God will get His purposes done. God will not be thwarted. He is sovereign in the heavens and upon the earth. No man can stay His hand, even when His enemies rise up against Him. Why do the nations rage? The Lord will have them in derision. The Lord’s victory is sure in His Son, our Savior and King, and the Kingdom of God will be gloriously triumphant. God’s purposes will stand not only over His enemies but He can even overcome His people when they become His adversaries.

There are no heroes in this text. Isaac, because of his appetites from his soul, wants to thwart the purpose of God and give the blessing to Esau. Then there is Esau and his willingness to thwart God’s purposes and not bow to them. Here is Isaac governed by his appetites, thwarting God’s purposes, standing against the Lord, personally attempting to get something done in a clandestine service that is opposed to God’s will. Esau is complicit. Esau is a man who is ruled by his appetites, his own ends, his own violence and his own bitterness. Here is Rebekah who believes God’s promises and wants them but can’t wait on God’s ways. She’ll take the world’s ways to try to get God’s end done. So she chooses the wrong methods even though she has the right objective. Then she

draws her son Jacob into it who is willingly an accomplice as a liar, deceiver and as a blasphemer.

By the end of the text God's purposes are accomplished and at the end of the text there is a comfort for us. God not only works through His people, but when necessary He can overcome His people. How many churches are abandoning the faith today? I tell you God's Kingdom will still rule and reign to the end. How many homes are abandoning the Biblical values of the family? We are even trying to redefine marriage into perversion but God's purposes will stand. God draws straight lines even with crooked sticks.

The second takeaway is God's plans include people. This text in Genesis 27 sends two trajectories into the New Testament. The New Testament draws from this text to get two points across to us. I'd like to look at one of those texts in Romans 9. A man said to me the other day "Harry, do you believe in election?" I said "I believe in the Bible so I have to believe in election." He said "Oh you mean that God elects on the basis of what He knows we're going to do?" I said "No that's not what I believe." If God's election stood on my good intentions, I don't have a chance. The electing grace of God is from the sovereign grace and love of God. These texts that we have been studying find their trajectory to teach us that.

Romans 9:6–15 says [6] *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, [7] and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." [8] 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 offspring. [9] For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." [10] And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, [11] though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—[12] she was told, "The older will serve the younger." [13] As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." [14] What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! [15] For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*

Now we're at the crux of the matter. Are we saved by grace or are we saved by our merits? Are we saved by God's sovereign love that takes hold of sinners who would not have anything to do with Him? There is none who seek God, no not one. There is none who understand but God chose to work in our life, to give us a heart that would chose Him that we might serve Him. It is not my heart that chose Him but God's heart was moved to choose me. God's heart was moved upon me and my heart was changed to come to Him.

Here the Bible gives us these people in the text very clearly. God's sovereign grace reveals and confirms Esau's sinful heart. God says "Jacob I have loved and Esau I have brought My judgment upon." The wrath of God now comes upon Esau. Why? It is because Esau's heart is now revealed and confirmed for even his sorrow is that which confirms a self-centered agenda. Now I'd like to look at that second New Testament text in Hebrews 12. Here is the call to encourage one another.

Hebrews 12:15–17 says [15] *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become*

defiled; [16] that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. [17] For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Here his reprobation, his rebellion, his heart is confirmed as God's grace is unfolded in Genesis 27. Even Esau's repentance shows us the difference between worldly sorrow and Godly repentance. Why is Esau weeping? Is it because his appetites have so governed him that he falls prey to any plot? No, he says "I'm a victim. It's Jacob's fault. Forget my appetites, my self-centeredness, my agenda." He has no repentance. The difference between Godly repentance and worldly sorrow is Godly repentance is sorrow over the sinfulness of sin against God. Worldly sorrow is sorrow because of the consequences.

Two years ago I went to the home I grew up in because it was for sale and there was an open house so my sisters and I slipped in to see it. I don't know what happened but that house shrunk. Every room in that house seemed so much smaller to me at that moment. I remember standing at the steps that led down to my bedroom and remembered on many occasions where my father caught me in disobedience and as was his way he would say to me "Go upstairs, get the belt and go downstairs to your room for I'll be with you in a minute." One my way to the room I would always say to my father "Dad, I am so sorry" and it never worked because my dad knew that I was not sorry that I disobeyed him. I was sorry that I got caught and I had to face the consequences. That's what I was sorry about.

Esau has no Godly repentance here. This isn't a man that wants to get into the Kingdom and be kept. This is God's decree confirming the heart of the man. The heart of a man is against the Lord and in it beats bitterness. I beg you not to let bitterness in your soul. Bitterness is drinking poison thinking you're going to kill somebody and bitterness does bring a root that destroys others. Be not like Esau.

The second thing is that God's grace lays hold of Jacob. God's wrath could have fallen upon Jacob but God chose to be gracious to Jacob and love him. Then I look at this and think "Here's my problem with election." I look at God and say "Why Jacob? Why not Esau?" Which one are you drawn to? I like Esau because he's a huntin' and fishin' man. I'm sure he has some bird dogs. He's a man's man. He says "Food and drink for my men and horses." I like Esau.

Jacob is in the kitchen. He's a mama's boy. He's a liar, deceiver, a cheat, vulgar, profane, whisperer and that's the guy you want to beat the tar out of. Then it strikes me as to what God is saying here to me. Harry, you think Jacob is distasteful to you? You ought to see what you were to Me but I loved you. I loved you so much that I put My Son for you. Your curse He bore that you might have life and I did it because I chose to love you. So here we confirm the sinfulness of the heart of Esau as his heart is revealed. Here we see the grace of God taking hold and changing the heart of Jacob.

God's sovereign grace reveals and changes Isaac's heart. Here is Isaac a man from his soul, who is trying to outdo God and circumvent God. Yet when he sees what happens when the birthright is gone and the family blessing just went to Jacob, he shakes violently. That is the language we get for earthquake, siesmos. I believe that Isaac is already saved but Isaac gets broken right here. He says "The blessing stands. I won't try to undo the blessing. I'm learning my lessons well." He is broken and no longer does he

try to autonomously get the blessings of God but circumvent the purposes of God. He now bows to God even by giving the anti-blessing to Esau. Isaac is broken by the hand of the Lord. Then there is Rebekah's misery because she cannot trust in God's purposes to be done God's ways and extends for the rest of her life. She dies even without a memorial.

I have one final takeaway. God has something to say to all of us. I want to reaffirm that our God is an unstoppable God. He will get His purposes done. Our God is an awesome God. He overcomes the rage of the nations, the sinfulness of man, the enmity of man, Satan, sin, death, hell and the grave and even when He has to He will overcome us. He'll work through us and when necessary around us and in spite of us. When this unstoppable God works He not only draws straight lines with crooked sticks but on the way He strings out some sticks, just like me, you and Isaac.

Secondly, while God will not be stopped when we falter and fail by sinning against Him, our sins still have consequences. Isaac, even though he is broken, praise the Lord, on this day will lose two sons. One (Jacob) will go to Mesopotamia and the other (Esau) will marry a third woman (two Hittite women, one Ishmael woman) and will leave the home. Esau can't get any more from his father so he leaves. What Rebekah feared of losing both her sons came upon her. She lost both and will never see Jacob again. Esau will be confirmed in his rebellion and spend his life, except for some momentary blessings from God's common grace, as a bitter man, spreading bitterness to a whole nation called the Edomites.

Even though Jacob has God's blessing, this blasphemous and liar, who will still be taught some disciplinary lessons from the Lord, and owns everything from his father, will end up a servant and slave for the next twenty years. This man who deceived his father will be deceived by Rebekah's brother Laban and then later deceived by two of his own sons. Though God's grace reaches down and saves him, the deceiver will be deceived. The manipulator will be manipulated.

When I was reading through this the absurdity of the moment in Genesis 27 got me. I'm sitting at my desk and the absurdity of this moment came over me. Here is Rebekah meticulously scheming with Jacob, who turns goats into wild meat and covers those skins on her son to deceive her husband. Then here is Jacob coming into the room covered in oversize clothes from Esau, with the skins covering his arms and neck and bringing in the food. It's almost to the extent of comic proportions to think of this moment. If I was a betting man I'd almost bet that Rebekah was behind the door while Jacob is in the room with his father, giving him cues and telling him what to do and when to do it, behind Isaac's back. The absurdity of that is totally insignificant compared to the absurdity when we say to God that we have a better way to do our home and family than the Word of God, like Rebekah did.

Ladies, I plead with you, be not a daughter of Rebekah, but a daughter of Sarah. Respect your husband. Don't manipulate him. Compliment your husband. Come along side of him. Submit to your husband and trust that God's ends are done through God's ways. Men, we must not be like Esau and Isaac, ruled by the appetites of our life – food, drink, sex. We must be men who are filled with the Spirit of God, exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Our wives are drawn into our lives because we love them. Children, don't be like Esau and Jacob. Don't mock your parents. Honor them and respect them.

God's purposes will always be accomplished but don't be absurd and try to do God's purposes the world's way. Do it God's way. For the church, I know they are feeling marginalized in our culture but the answer is not to become the world. If we want to impact the world, the church has a good end, a good objective, but it must be done God's way. Worship must be worship of the living God, not turned into a circus. Evangelism must be the communication of the Gospel of grace, not a prosperity gospel or a therapy gospel or a wealth gospel or a health gospel but the Gospel of Grace. I don't doubt motivations and ends but the means are attached to the end. God's people, God's purposes and God's way will never lack for God's power. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in this Your Word and the privilege to worship. There may be some reading this that need to know what it means to come to Christ. The love of God in Jesus Christ has been declared and may they have the heart of Jacob and flee to Christ. We give you this Gospel invitation to come to Christ just as you are. If you have made that decision to follow Christ please contact us at Briarwood at 205.776.5200 for we would like to pray with you and help you get started in your walk with Him. Some of us are just beginning, including the one speaking to you now and we want to do Your work God. We want to get Your objectives done for Your glory, making disciples of all the nations. Help us to know Your ways, the power of Your Spirit, the Truth of Your Word and the exaltation of Christ. Lord, we don't want to be stupid concerning our culture but we don't want to be conformed to it. We want to be in the world but not of the world. May our homes show the roles and relationships that Jesus has prescribed because we trust His Word. May our churches rise up and believe through the foolishness of preaching men and women are being saved by making disciples, sharing Christ and speaking the truth in love that You uses Your means to accomplish Your purposes. May the love of Christ constrain us and the truth of Christ compel us for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.