

Genesis, pt2: God Guards His Covenant Genesis 23-25

MPS God sovereignly **guards** His covenant promise to secure salvation for all who believe in Jesus Christ.
OBJ Every person can understand how God sovereignly guards salvation by Three Lessons

INTRO **What does it mean to you to say that God is sovereign?** For most of us we would say, “it means God can do as He chooses.” And we are okay with this, until what He chooses is what we do not understand, what we do not like or agree with. Then, I find most people love to speak of God’s sovereignty until it moves into the realm beyond our control. But that is exactly where God’s sovereignty dwells. **So, what are we to do when God’s sovereignty moves into the realm beyond our understanding or control?** Think about this, **are there any situations in life that you have had to accept as God’s sovereign plan that you find yourself struggling to accept?** If we are honest, we must answer “yes”. I want to help us with this today.

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Genesis 23-24 Sarah dies, and Abraham buys a field in Hebron of Canaan with a cave in which to bury her. He purchases the land to secure his possession of it. There he buried Sarah. Abraham, now very advanced in age and blessed by the Lord, turns his focus to the heritage he will pass on to his son of promise, Isaac. And at the center of his concern is the promise from God, to whom he honors in his ways to trust in that covenant promise. He sends his servant with specific instructions to find a wife for his son, he was to ensure the wife was one of God’s people in accordance with God’s Law, and the teaching of God’s Word.^{Deut7:3,4; 1Cor7:39} One central focus that consumes Abraham’s charge, God’s call and man’s obedience are priority.^{24:6-8} So the servant goes and meets Rebekah. The emphasis rests on the process by which she is identified, chosen and called. Considered by some the “female Abraham”¹, we see once again the echoes of Abraham’s call in God’s sovereign choosing as Rebekah accepts the prayerful call to leave her land and go in obedience.^{24:58} She is blessed by her family and sent with Abraham’s servant. They return and Isaac receives Rebekah as his wife. Genesis 23 and 24 remind us by the blessing bestowed on Abraham by others that God is working, that He is true, and that He is faithful to His covenant promise. **God’s Covenant promise now has a new family to which Abraham can bestow his heritage, and more importantly, that God has sovereignly chosen to pass on as His chosen person.**

Genesis 25 opens with Abraham’s remarriage and additional family lineage, but his blessing remains on Isaac exclusively as verse five states, “*Abraham gave all he had to Isaac.*” Abraham cared for his other children, but the portion of priority recognized God’s promise rested on Isaac, through whom His covenant blessing would continue, even as he separated Isaac from the others. Abraham dies and we read where Isaac and Ishmael bury Abraham in the cave with Sarah. Verse 11 records that after his death and burial, God blessed his son Isaac. **The unity of Abraham and God’s blessing highlights to emphasize that God works by His sovereign choice to fulfill the promise of His covenant.**

TRANS **We love to speak of God’s sovereignty, and rightly so, but it is often what we have the most trouble with, and especially in His election. But friends, know that election is God’s guarding work in securing the promise of His covenant, the salvation of our souls.** Genesis 25 highlights God’s sovereign choice in carrying forth His covenant.

READ Genesis 25:19-28 the parenting of the next generation

These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham fathered Isaac, ²⁰and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. ²¹And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²²The 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. ²³And the LORD said to her,

“Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided;

¹ K. A. Mathews, [Genesis 11:27–50:26](#), vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 322. Mathews states, She is the “female Abraham” who is challenged with a divine call to leave family and homeland on the testimony of the servant’s answered prayer (vv. 40–48).”



the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”

²⁴When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. ²⁶Afterward 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.

²⁷When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.

²⁸Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. **Genesis 25:19-28**

TRANS Genesis 25 includes two (of ten) literary phrases by which the whole book is organized, *toledots*. Here we encounter numbers eight and nine as we transition to the next generation. The generational head is not the key character of focus, so with Isaac (25:19) we begin tracking with Jacob. And his generation we will trace for remainder of Genesis.

Isaac is forty years old when he married Rebekah. Again, there is difficulty in conceiving, exemplified by Isaac’s prayerful focus. God grants his prayer and Rebekah conceives. The children struggle in the womb, such that Rebekah recognizes it and prays, “*If it is thus, why is this happening?*” Her prayer in the original language is more exhausted utterance than clear inquiry. Rebekah’s question was something like this, “*how can the pleasure of God’s smile (in conceiving so quickly) become bitterness from His blessing, (in the struggle between these two)?*” (Now, every parent asks something similar around age 2 or 3 when they realize the depth of depravity THEIR “little angel” actually holds, and how ready and willingly they are to use it against THEM!) But this question expresses more. A mother with two babies whom she dearly loves, but who incessantly only struggle against each other. *So what does she do?* Rebekah inquires of the Lord and He answers her. The Lord tells her that it is not only two children in her womb, but two nations that will be divided, and the younger will rule the older. There is no response recorded to the Lord’s words, but we see His distinct work; **God sovereignly chooses Jacob over Esau for His covenant promise.**

When Rebekah gives birth, the first one to come out is described as red and a hairy cloak. They named him Esau. Then his brother came out holding Esau’s heel, and they named him Jacob, or grabber. Isaac was sixty when they were born. Esau became a skilled hunter and man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. And the writer tells us that Isaac love Esau because he loved his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. From here on we learn more about Esau and Jacob than we know about Isaac. And Jacob will carry forth through the remainder of Genesis as God’s sovereign choice.

Why do we learn such information on this family? Isaac has already been part of his father’s critical moment with God. As his children come on the scene we see that they will be more key characters in the story than Isaac himself. And the choice God makes, that seem to go against the natural order, we are not given full explanation. **What are we to do with this?**

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What God is doing, ALL that He is doing in this world is to bring redemption and reconciliation through Jesus Christ. We are told this repeatedly in the Bible. We can trust His work. We must trust Him.

OBJ **Three Lessons of God’s Sovereignty that guard our salvation, that we must never forget.**

1. God’s sovereign election is the sure certainty and eternal security of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

This we can say with greatest certainty; It’s NOT because of the people. God’s covenant was never sustained by the perfect performance of people, and not even God’s people, but only because of God. When Paul extols the great work of God in salvation (Eph 1), it is His work, what He is doing! The certainty of our election in Jesus Christ is not a doctrine whereby we rest to “check out” spiritually or live however we chose now. The certainty of our election is the anchoring confidence in which we trust to hold us as we engage to serve His mission, regardless the direction or demand, the sacrifice or cost. The God who is sovereign in salvation is sovereign in mission.

We will not always understand God’s will because His ways and thoughts are not ours, but higher. But we can always trust His will. And the way we trust Him when we don’t understand Him is to focus on what we know to be true of Him in the times



/ areas we don't know or do not fully understand. **Is there anything in your life that is causing you to doubt or disbelieve God?** If so, know that He calls you to listen to His promise for you in salvation and trust His work / for you.

God's sovereign work in guarding His covenant means that we are secure in our salvation and in serving His mission, regardless of what comes against to threaten us or how miserably we fail Him at times. God will not fail us. He is guarding His work to bring it to perfect completion.^{Phil1:6}

We are marked by God in salvation in a particular way; "*holy and blameless before him*". This "mark" comes by the good deposit, as Paul says, that He has given to us in the gospel. **Are you guarding the good deposit He has entrusted to you?** (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14)

2. God's sovereign election does not remove **challenge, struggle, difficulty or suffering** from our **faith journey in following God.**

In the fulfillment of God's covenant promise through His chosen instrument / people, we must remember that they are not without challenge, struggle and difficulty. And though it can, it does not necessarily indicate something wrong about us or God. These are not indicators of God's lack of care or concern nor His inability to fulfill His promise. Rather, they are the very means by which God ordains to fulfill His promise, by turning the eyes, hearts and minds of His people to Him to trust His work. The end of verse 26, "*Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.*", reminds us that what we read in a minute actually records years.

When I read the Bible I often think, "I want to be like...the radical faith of Abraham, the commanding boldness of Moses, the fierce warrior-mindedness and the in-touch relational honesty of David, the wisdom of Solomon...well, at least a lot like them. But I never find myself saying, "I want to be like Jacob, holding on to the heel of those before me to swindle and cheat all I can out of them." And yet, when I am honest, I most identify with Jacob's propensity to wrestle with God and learn his way by hard lessons above simple faith. But there is one aspect of Jacob's life that we see repeatedly, and this is the thread of promise through which God works; **Jacob lives aware of God and honors Him as Lord.**

James 1:2-4 teach us this, that the work of God in us is a process. We too often measure life by a single moment, when we should be measuring every moment by the whole of life. Philippians 1:6 promises that our sure outcome is in God's hands; God will bring His work in us to completion. **Will you honor the Lord and trust His promise to finish in you what He started?**

3. God's sovereign election secures us to walk by **faith with Jesus**, not to walk with **no need** for Him.

There is a stark contrast between the life of Esau and Jacob.

Esau made his way by his own ability; a self-made man. He failed to honor his birthright because he trusted his own strength and ability. But most important was a lack of recognition of God and awareness for what He was doing. Hebrews 12:16-17 tells us that Esau was a profane (unholy) person, "not spiritually minded but rather a man taken up with the things of the here and now."² And while it seems that Esau later came to realize what he had done, he could not undo it. He could come back to God, but he could not undo his act to disregard God, and that is likely what kept him from returning.

Jacob was a self-made man, too, as a swindler and cheat. Hosea 12:3 says he was a grabber of heels and wrestler with God. He idolized (coveted) his brother's birthright, and lived by deception to get what he felt he deserved.

² Leon Morris, "[Hebrews.](#)" in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 140. Morris writes, "The word rendered "godless" (bebēlos) means "unhallowed," "profane." The author is saying that Esau was not spiritually minded but rather a man taken up with the things of the here and now. This is apparent in the incident referred to, when Esau for just one meal bargained away "his inheritance rights as the oldest son" (cf. Gen 25:29-34). He could not recognize its true value. His insistence on the gratification of his immediate needs led him to overlook the importance of his rights as the firstborn. For a small immediate gain, he bartered away what was of infinitely greater worth. So with the apostates."



God doesn't choose Jacob because he is more godly than Esau; it is not because of Jacob that God chooses him. And that is the point in God's sovereign work. The gospel declares that we are not saved because of who we are, but because of who God is. There is nothing in us that deserves God's mercy, but the very nature of God is to be gracious and loving toward us in Jesus. [God gives His good deposit of eternal life through Jesus Christ by grace through faith alone.](#)

Are you honoring and worshiping God with your whole life, recognizing that He is the One working in you? Is there anywhere you are failing to honor or recognize His work? (Esau) Is there anywhere you are neglecting to trust His work in you? (Jacob)

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May the good deposit entrusted to us, Christian, our salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, be the precious treasure of our whole life that in finding it we sell out all else to Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, with our ALL. And to entrust it to our children in all.

