# **A Twin Study**

Genesis 25:19 – 34

**Proposition:** The twin study teaches us that we should persist in our praying and value our birthright as our greatest treasure.

**Application:** Persistently pray through our problems. Cling tightly to our inheritance.

**Introduction**

What would you think if you saw a 2015 Rolls Royce with only 10 000 km selling for a mere $5000.00. Your first thought would likely be “I wonder what is wrong with that car?” The price a seller demands reflects their opinion of the object they are selling. If a person treasures what they have it would take a large sum of money to part with it. But a person who holds an object in low regard would give it away for a pittance. Today we are doing a twin study. The twin study will teach us two things: The first is to persistently pray through our problems and the second is to treasure our inheritance.

1. **The Birth** (25:19 – 26)

*Persistent Prayer* (25:19 – 21): This passage begins with a problem. The barrenness of Rebekah. The problem prompted Isaac to pray. Behind the word *pray*, is the sense that Isaac poured out his pleas before the Lord in abundance. Isaac’s prayer was not a one-time request – “Lord, please help us have a child, in Jesus name, Amen.” No! Isaac stormed the gates of heaven many times with the same request. He prayed *earnestly* – pouring his heart out before the Lord. He prayed *frequently* – for almost twenty years. He prayed *specifically,* that Rebekah would bear a child in accord with the will of God.

For over 15 years Isaac prayed the same prayer. After 15 or so years he received his answer. Though God always answers our prayers that are in the name of Christ Jesus and in His will, the answer is often slow in coming.

But notice how the Lord answered. He answered beyond what Isaac asked. He answered not with one but two children.

**Read** Eph 3:20, 21

**Application:** At this time in history we are facing a global crisis – a crisis we have not seen before. When trials and hardships confront us, prayer needs to be foremost in our lives and in the life of the church. That is why Enoch and I have established the COVID – 19 prayer initiative. Here is an opportunity to come together in an online prayer meeting three times a day from Monday to Thursday. And like Isaac, we pray earnestly, we pray frequently, and we pray specifically until the pandemic is over. If you would like to join us, please visit our website for more details.

*Wrestling in the Womb* (25:22): God answered Isaac’s prayer with the blessing of twins. But even with blessing comes struggle. This does not suggest there was something wrong with God’s blessing, but it does mean that great problems can go along with God’s blessing.

These were not normal pregnancy pains. This was not mild discomfort. Something strange was taking place in Rebekah’s womb. She likely asked a few mothers in the area if this was normal? She found no fitting answer. So, Rebekah inquired of the Lord likely by going to a prophet who would answer her with a word from God.

**Read** 1 Sam 9:9

Just as Isaac went to the Lord when faced with a problem, Rebekah went to the Lord in her perplexity.

She had a good example in her husband about what to do when faced with problems and perplexities. The Lord answered Rebekah not with a miracle but with a message.

*Prayer and Prophecy* (25:23): What was going on in Rebekah’s womb was a wrestling match between the pre-natal boys. The word *struggled together* has the sense of a striking at each other. These two boys were hostile even before birth. This was a crushing sibling rivalry.

Unlike most twins born of the same parents, these twins were destined to be enemies. The two infants stand for two nations – Israel and Edom. Their pre-natal conflict foretold the great conflict that would play out in the future between Jacob’s descendants and Esau’s descendants. Through Jacob the Messiah would come. So already in the womb, evil strikes against the messianic line.

As the boys mature, they will be distinct in appearance, distinct in vocation and distinct in beliefs. They will not be partners in building the Jewish nation.

Not only do the twins represent rivalries but they also will battle for dominance. As Israel obeyed the Lord, Edom would serve Israel. As was the case in the time of David.

**Read** 2 Sam 8:14

When Israel disobeyed the Lord, Edom would enslave them. As was the case in the days of Herod.

**Read** Matt 2:16 – 18

This pre-natal battle reflects the conflict between Edom and Israel, but it also reflects the war between flesh and Spirit, between good and evil, between sin and righteousness. The ever-present foe within us is always hostile to the work of the Spirit.

The innate flesh and the indwelling Spirit are forever at war.

**Read** Gal 5:17

The works of the flesh can only be overcome by the greater power of the Spirit.

The flesh is the older nature and the new nature is younger. The new nature is given at the new birth. My old nature is almost 60 years old my new nature is almost 40 years old. For the Christian, the old nature will serve the new nature. The future of the covenants of God, lie with the younger Jacob and not with the older Esau, in the same way our spiritual future lies not with the old nature but with the new. The Lord will always support the new nature in its struggles for mastery.

*Ruddy and Red* (25:24 – 26): The ruddy appearance of Esau at birth was a herald of what was to come. His hair was red and his skin reddish.

The colour red was a sign that the descendants of Esau, known as the Edomites, would always be living by the sword, and shedding much blood.

**Read** Gen 27:40a; Ezek 35:6

**Transition:** What we are learning from this twin study, is that God answered Isaac’s prayer with the blessing of twins. But great problems can accompany God’s blessing. Conflicts are not necessary to achieve God’s will, but out of struggle His will can be achieved. We looked at the conflict as it relates to the birth of the twins now let us explore the conflict as it relates to the birthright of the twins.

1. **The Birthright** (25:27 – 34)

*Separation of the Sons* (25:27, 28): The hidden struggle in the womb now begins to play out in the world.

They were twins in the womb but as they forged entirely new paths their twin nature diminished. There was nothing twin like about these brothers. Whether in their looks or in their likings.

*In the fields*: Esau was a skillful hunter. Time and again he faced mortal dangers to supply game for his father. Why did Esau choose this line of work since Isaac’s family had more than enough livestock to provide for the family. Did Esau choose the hunting vocation because he knew Father Isaac loved to eat wild meat? Was this how Esau could stay in the good graces of his father Isaac?

*On the Farm* (25:27, 28): Rebekah favoured Jacob. The text does not tell us why, but my sense is because she knew God’s plan for the boys having been the recipient of the prophetic message. Rebekah may not have shared God’s plan for the boys with Isaac.

The fact that Jacob was a *peaceful man* (NASB) or a *plain man* (KJV) does not do justice to the meaning of the word in Hebrew. The word has the sense of *blameless, upright,* and *integrity.* The Lord used the same word (*tam*) when speaking to satan about Job.

**Read** Job 1:1, 8

Jacob was an upright man in the sense that he valued spiritual things. For Jacob, spiritual realities were priority. His *dwelling in tents* does not suggest he was sitting at home chilling out with mom while Esau was out risking his life hunting for food. Jacob dwelt in tents as a shepherd farmer. He stayed at home tending to the business of the farm and feeding livestock rather than chasing wildlife.

*Faint from a Futile Hunt* (25:29, 30): Now Esau came back from a fruitless effort in the fields and was hungry for some of Jacob’s red lentil stew.

Esau may have been upset after a long hard chase with nothing to show. Now he was faint and famished. The phrase *please let me have a swallow* is an expression used for feeding animals. The writer is comparing Esau’s appetite to a voracious animal. It could be paraphrased as *cram some of the red stuff down my throat.* The expression has the sense of haste and intense desire.

*Bargaining for the Birthright* (25:31 – 33): Because Jacob was an upright man, because he valued spiritual realities, he knew the immense blessing that came with the birthright. With the birthright came the privilege of becoming the chosen people of God. The birthright concerned the future coming of the Messiah. The birthright involved the blessing of the nations. The blessing of the birthright was spiritual and mostly future. Esau as the oldest son had first claim to keep the birthright alive.

But it was Jacob who yearned to be the one through whom the birthright lived on. Esau saw more value in a bowl of stew than in the spiritual blessing of the birthright. He had no desire to cling to an intangible blessing that could not be enjoyed in the moment.

**Application:** How easy and how dangerous it is to raise the value of material things above the value of spiritual realities. The singer Madonna wrote in one of her songs, “*we are living in a material world and I am a material girl*.” We are always tempted to turn our back on the great spiritual realities that could be ours in Christ Jesus in favour of some temporary gain. Let us be careful of the “bargains” we make in life. Our culture places a high price tag on what is worthless and discards as worthless what is of eternal value. Esau turned his back on all the spiritual blessings that were his for a momentary pleasure. He sacrificed the permanent on the altar of the immediate.

*Running off with no regrets* (25:34): Esau swallowed his soup, stood up and stomped out. He did not protest what his brother had done. He did not reflect on what he had done. He did not regret what he had discarded. He was content to leave the blessing with Jacob and gave it no further thought. When Esau traded his birthright for a mere pittance, he showed utter contempt for the spiritual blessing the Lord freely offered to him.

**Read** Heb 12:16

**Conclusion**

A man was doing some spring cleaning and found an old dusty German Bible in his attic. He could not read German, so he tossed it in the box for his upcoming garage sale. On the day of the sale someone asked about the dusty old German Bible he was selling. “Why are you selling this Bible?”

“What use is an old dusty Bible if I can’t read it?” the man replied. The buyer purchased the Old Dusty German Bible for $10.00. When the buyer arrived home, he noticed it was printed by someone called Gutenberg. That Bible was one of the first Bibles ever printed. He eventually sold it for 2 million dollars.

**Read** Rom 8:16, 17

As believers we have a birthright. All we have here on earth is a bowl of stew in comparison to what we will one day inherit for all eternity. Let us be careful of the “bargains” we make in life. Let us not turn down eternal realities for momentary pleasures. Let us not treat as worthless what is in fact valuable. The twin study teaches us that we are to persistently pray through our problems, and we are to tightly cling to our inheritance.