

Day 13 :: Feb. 16

As a youth pastor, it always drove me a little nuts when kids would share with me the stories their parents had shared with them. Normally, these stories would be about mom or dad's high school days and would always include their more wild moments. Dad was a bully who regrets his ways now. Mom was a liar who snuck out of the house to go drinking with friends right under grandpa's nose. Dad skipped school to spend a day on the beach with friends. Mom was always faking sick to go to the movies during the day. The stories never stopped, and were told to quietly help mom and dad feel less like aging adults and more like "the cool parents".

Inevitably, however, these stories of their mischievous past would be told to me by a teen who used them as an excuse to do similar things. "I slept with my girlfriend, but my parents don't need to know; they did the same things when they were my age." And inevitably I would convince the student to tell the parents, whereupon the parents would be enraged at such a society that would raise kids to be so disrespectful.

Jacob was that parent. I know he told the stories of his parent-deceptions to his sons. I know because his sons grow up to be just like dear old dad. In the same way that Rebekah raised Jacob to be a schemer and master manipulator, so Jacob raised his sons to do the same thing. From Laban manipulating Jacob into marrying both of his daughters, to Jacob manipulating Esau to give him his birthright, to Rebekah manipulating Jacob to impersonate his brother, to Jacob manipulating Isaac to give him his blessing, to Jacob's sons manipulating him to give up his beloved son Joseph – this is a story of a family line of schemers.

And through all the scheming and cheating, lying and stealing, God's will was accomplished. Through parents accidentally approving of their children's misbehavior with their own stories, God's will is accomplished. You see, whatever we may do, however we may sin, whenever we may fail, God's will is accomplished. Maybe we need to stop thinking God is limited by our own obedience and begin to believe that He has his plan set in motion regardless of our righteousness. What we do is about our relationship with God, not about His ability to accomplish His plan. He is so much bigger than that.