

XLIII. Genesis in Biblical Perspective

The Gospel of Christ from Genesis

“Who is Your God?”

Genesis 25:29–34

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We are still in Genesis 25 for this study because we only got half the study done on the chapter dealing with the birthright so I'd like to briefly review what we went over in the last study to prepare you for this one. You need to have this in your mind as you read the text. Do you like surprise packages? I love surprise packages as long as I like the surprise that's in the package. I tried a surprise package with my wife when we got married. I knew she knew I was going to ask her to marry me and knew she knew I was probably going to be giving her a ring. So one weekend when she was coming home I knew the only way she could get home was through the Trailways bus line, so when I got off work I came to pick her up at the bus station. We got in the car and I said “Honey, want to give you something” and she said “What is that?” I gave her a box with a ring in it and said “Will you marry me?” She said “Oh yes!” That was one of the dumbest decisions she has ever made in her life. She opens the box and put the ring on and said “Oh it's so nice.” I said “Is that all you are going to say?” “Yes.” “Do you know how much this cost me?” She said “I really like it.” I said, “Let me see that ring.” As we were riding along I took the ring and threw it out the window. I love that moment and I love to watch a crowd's reaction at that moment when I tell that story because it's like reliving it all over again.

She said “What are you doing?” I said, “If that's all you care about, it doesn't matter anything to me.” She was kind of going to pieces there and then I said “Reach in the glove compartment” and instead of a hanky she found another box. She opened the box and there was the biggest diamond anyone had ever bought for their wife. She took and there was the real deal, a surprise package.

Rebekah received a surprise package. She had this tumultuous pregnancy and during that time she said “Lord, what is going on here?” The Lord says “You will have two sons and in reality you'll give birth to two nations and they have two destinies that you are not going to believe.” The first one out of the womb was Esau. The text says he was red all over and he had so much hair it looked like a hairy cloak. Not only that he'd grow up to be an outdoorsman, a man's man. He would be a hunter and the Bible tells us that his father loved him. This man growing up with partiality had a twin. Jacob came out so close behind Esau that he was clutching at his heel, holding on to it. Jacob comes forth as a quiet man but not as a “godly” quiet but the word's meaning is kind of like the guy that lurks in the shadows. He quietly always seems to be somewhere. He was an indoors man, a domesticated man and his mother was partial to him.

These two men that are actually two nations had two destinies. God says in His sovereign grace, the untamed grace of God, “This will not come by order of nature or order of convention but by the order of grace I have declared that even though I have the right to bring judgment upon them both I'm going to give grace to Jacob and the younger will be served by the older. The older will serve the younger and the blessing will be there.”

Then comes a defining moment and always watch for this when you're studying your Bible. The Bible will present you people and then the Bible will give you a short historical narrative that's very defining about their life that gives you an insight into their life. For instance, Eve has Cain and Abel. She names Cain as the man child from the Lord and she thinks he's the one that was promised but in reality the blessing of God is going to fall upon Abel. Then comes a narrative moment where they both come to a worship service. Cain brings some of the fruit of the ground during the offering and Abel brings the first of the flock and the fat portions. The Bible says the Lord had regard for Abel and the line of darkness begins with Cain as he murders his brother. That's a defining moment that tells you about Cain and Abel.

This is a defining moment that tells you about Jacob and Esau. It's put right here into the life of Isaac to tell you about one of the patriarchs who was the only monogamous one. He was the only one who had these two sons and it tells you something about them. Here is what I want you to plant in your mind. Have you ever wondered why people make the decisions they make in life? The decisions you make in life are related to the God of your life or gods of your life. What and whoever is God in your life determines the decisions you ultimately make in life. Now let's open up the scene. Let's look at Genesis 25:29 and here's this definitive narrative.

Genesis 25:29–34 says [29] Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. [30] And Esau said to Jacob (with a sense of urgency), "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) [31] Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." [32] Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" [33] Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. [34] Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Birthright is not a common concept for us today. A birthright is defined in the Bible in Deuteronomy 21:7 and 17 and I Chronicles 5:1. Here is the essence of what a birthright is. The birthright had two factors attached to it. The first thing is that when you receive the birthright you received the stewardship of the family name and its honor. You were the next in line for headship in the family. The one with the birthright was responsible for the headship of the next generation and had the responsibility of the honor and carrying on with dignity the name of the family. The second thing about the birthright was that whoever had the birthright had a double portion of the inheritance of however it was divided.

So how many sons did Jacob have? Jacob had twelve sons and that means each son's inheritance would be a twelfth but if you're the first born then your inheritance would be two twelfths or one sixth. So if you have a lot of sons this part about the resources may not mean a lot unless the dad is big time rich or something. If you have two sons like Isaac then his inheritance will be divided in half and then the one with the birthright gets a double portion then that means Esau would get two thirds of everything Isaac owned. Jacob would get one third. You can imagine if you're the second son in the family and this is the deal on the birthright and the only difference is that he was born before me, then that probably wouldn't seem fair. You really have to deal with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God with contentment there. This is God's will because

God appointed him to be born first so I'm going to be content but you see where a man would really have to wrestle with that.

Now think about it if you were born twins. In other words, it's not like it's a couple of years between you and the firstborn. It's only a couple of seconds. The only difference is that he's only a couple of seconds ahead and the older will get the birthright. Now you get the idea why Jacob is holding the heel. I think he's pulling him back. "I want to go out first!" So Jacob has his mind set on this birthright.

The scene opens with Jacob in the kitchen cooking soup. Esau looks like he has been out on a hunting trip and he comes in exhausted. You can almost see him come in, sit down at the table, pound his fist saying "Food and drink for my men and horses." Esau comes in starving and the text has him saying "I'm exhausted!" which means he is on the verge of death. People do this all the time when they say "I'm so hungry I could die." He's tired, exhausted and hungry. He can smell that soup from the gourmet cook of the family, Jacob, who probably had a little help from mother. Esau says "Quick, give me some of that red stuff." He picks up the nickname Edom that is going to be given to the nation that comes after him, the Edomites.

Jacob lurking in the shadows realizes this is his moment. Jacob says "I'll give you the red stuff if you give me the birthright." Forget the heel, for I've got him by the throat now. Then Esau takes hours upon hours for thoughtful contemplation of the deal that's been put before him. No, out of shameless, mindless capitulation he thinks what good is a birthright if I'm about to die. Esau says "I'll make the deal." Jacob gives him the stew, throws in a little bread but before he does it he says to Esau, "Swear to me." He doesn't want Esau to come back later and say "I had my fingers crossed" or "Did I really say that?" The word 'swear' here means an oath of divinity based upon deity so Esau swears to it.

Notice how the text ends with two interesting comments. Look at the staccato narrative in Genesis 25:34b; ... *he ate and drank and rose and went his way*. He didn't offer to do the dishes. He didn't say 'thank you.' He didn't reach in his pocket for a tip. He didn't say a thing when he left. ... *He ate and drank and rose and went his way*. Does that sound familiar? Is there anyone in your household like that? The second thing is that the narrative ends with a Holy Spirit inspired editorial comment in Genesis 25:34c which says "*Thus Esau despised his birthright.*" The word despised is sometimes used and rightly so in the Old Testament translated by the word contempt. Esau's grandfather is Abraham, his father is Isaac who was substituted for on the altar, whom God gave a wife miraculously named Rebekah and he has all of that inheritance with that family name, a promise of a land and a seed but I think I'd rather have soup. He had contempt for the Divine birthright.

Interestingly, I want to show you another time that is used to give you a feel for what he is saying. It's used in II Samuel 12:10. David entered into an adulterous relationship with a woman named Bathsheba and she had a husband named Uriah. David getting caught up in the sin of adultery then makes the move to the sin of conspiracy to murder and has Uriah killed by putting him at the forefront in a battle, so that he has unlimited access to Uriah's wife. Nathan the prophet comes and preaches and David gets convicted of his sin. David writes his confession in Psalm 51. He writes about his forgiveness in Psalm 32 and then the Bible tells us even though he's forgiven there are consequences to sin. God says to David, "Because you have taken Uriah's life and his

wife, then the sword will never depart from your house for you have shown your ‘contempt’ (same word used with Esau) for the Lord. You have despised the Lord in the sin of adultery and murder conspiracy.” It’s a defining moment.

What are some things we can take away from this as a defining moment? I want to give you three takeaways from this. The first takeaway is many times our public sins are only the tip of the iceberg. Do you remember what happened to the Titanic? Basically as they were sailing across the ocean trying to set a record they were sailing through an iceberg field and had to try and dodge and iceberg so they shifted as hard as they could and missed the iceberg from the sea level up, but they hit the underneath part of the iceberg and it ripped through the bottom of the ship which caused the disaster. When you see an iceberg one third of it is above the sea and what is underneath is always twice as big. So below the surface it was wider, longer and bigger and it took the Titanic down.

Esau’s sin of selling the birthright for the meal was only the tip of the iceberg. There is much more about Esau and the reason we know is this passage ends up in the New Testament. We are given by the Holy Spirit an understanding of what is true about Esau. Let’s look at Hebrews 12. Here is an exhortation. You need to understand Hebrews 12 in context to Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11 is known as the hall of faith chapter because there is this great list of men and women of the covenant who knew the Lord and lived by faith and died in faith. They are sinners, yes, but they’re saved by grace, living by faith, grew in grace and died in faith. In contrast to Hebrews 11 we’re going to find out the antithesis in Hebrews 12. It is Esau. Esau is someone in the covenant who becomes a warning to us. Hebrews 12:15–16 says *[15] See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; (So here as a Christian and certainly as a pastor I must not presume that just because someone is baptized as a member of a church and come to church that you have a true relationship by the grace of God with Jesus Christ. I can’t assume that based on external involvement in the covenant.) 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.*

So He says see to it that no one is like Esau, the tip of the iceberg, who despised the Divine birthright for a meal – some stew and bread. As ridiculous as that sounds it’s actually just the tip of the iceberg. The writer of Hebrews inspired by the Holy Spirit says that underneath in Esau’s life he was pornos which is the Greek word for the word pornography. He was pornos and bebolas living without reference to God. He was godless, unholy. He was sexually immoral. He was unholy. He lived without reference to the living God. In other words, the first commandment is you shall have no other gods before Me and Esau basically said “You can do away with that one for I’m god.” The meal was the tip of the iceberg.

Sometimes when believers stumbling it has to do with what is above the water which is only the tip of the iceberg. O God, search my heart. Why is it that a man would have this Divine birthright with all of these blessings and gifts from God and says “I don’t want it”? The reason why was not because of the odor of the stew or simply the need of a meal that had been missed but there was something more at work in Esau that this is just letting you know about. Paul describes this for us. Let’s look at Philippians 3 where Paul is writing to the church at Philippi.

Philippians 3:17–19 says *[17] Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. [18] For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. [19] Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.* Paul is saying there is this reality that there are those where the cross of Christ is life and who are walking by the grace of God to the glory of God but over here there is another whole group. They don't have a birthright but they have a death end. Their end is destruction.

Paul tells us three things about them. They are ruled by their appetites. Their god is their belly. It maybe food appetite, drink appetite, sex appetite, knowledge appetite, power appetite but their appetites rule them. They could be all of them. They are untamed by God's grace. Secondly, they glory in their shame. When their sin is done and there are consequences there is no shame over that but there is glory in that. They boast in it. They boast in the result of their sexual promiscuity or sexual perversion or destroying families or destroying the dreams of young men and women coming out of college into their careers and then get derailed by the lust of the flesh and eyes and boastful pride of life. They boast in all of that. Thirdly, they don't have a Christian world and life view but they have a man centered earthly mind set. Their mind is set on earthly things. The temporal, the immediate, the now is what controls them and grasps them.

This was just the tip of the iceberg. Here is this moment where we see this shoot that pops up in Genesis has a root in Esau's life in which he does have a god but it's not the Lord God. It is himself. By the way, I know Isaac is saved, growing in grace and he's going to change but I think it's in there for a reason. Esau is a man whose god is his belly because he is focused upon self-reliance, self-adulation and self-gratification but where could he have learned that? Who loved him with partiality in the family? It was Isaac, his father. Do you remember why he loved Esau more than Jacob? Why is it that Isaac would fail to give equality or equanimity of love to both of his children? It was because Esau brought him game. Esau's appetite caused him to make parentally wrong decisions. While that was a matter of Isaac's sanctification it was embraced in Esau's rebellion against the Lord and his appetites weren't simply making mistakes in parental decisions but his appetites ruled him to the point that he alone was god and he despised the things of God in order to fulfill his own appetites.

He ate, he drank, he rose and went his way. Does that sound familiar? Do you hear the warning of Ecclesiastes? Ecclesiastes says the life of vanity is to eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow is destruction and death. That is what Esau has embraced in his life. It was there in some seed form even in his saved father Isaac. Now it was going to exponential terms in his own life so that he denied the reality of the living God.

Here is a second takeaway. I want to look back at Hebrews 12 and mention these three insights from the text. They are given by the Hebrews 12 text. Hebrews 12:16, 17 says *[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.* There are three thoughts I don't want you to miss on this second takeaway. I don't think it's the focus of the text but it's certainly emphasized to some degree. Not everyone who is within the bounds of the covenant community has a personal relationship of salvation

with the living God. Esau is in a covenant family. Esau is in a covenant community. Esau I'm sure was circumcised. Esau had heard of the blessings of God, the covenant mercies to Abraham and Isaac and God's covenant promises. He was within the bounds of the covenant yet he did not have a personal relationship with the living God rooted in salvation by grace. In the book of Hebrews in particular the Bible is always warning of that.

Peter warns us of that. In II Peter 2 Peter says there are those who have acknowledge the reality of Christ as Master and Redeemer but they have gone back like a sow to its mud and like a dog to its vomit. (II Peter 2:22 says [22] *What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."*) Then he says their last state has become worse for them than the first. That brings me to a second implication. Not only are there those within the covenant community that may not have a personal relationship with Christ, when it becomes manifested and revealed and they break covenant and walk away from it, Peter says their last state becomes worse for them than their first. This is not people who get saved and then get lost. If God saved you, you'll be saved and He'll grow you. He'll discipline you, encourage you and bring you where you need to be but as John puts it "They went out from us because they never really were one of us." It's a frightening thing because not only will there be those within the covenant community that have the externals of the covenant but not the internal root relationship with the living God.

The second implication is that the day of grace may be closed before the day of death. The day of grace may be closed before the day of death. In Hebrews 6 it says there are those who are among you who are tasting the good gifts of God. They are even being blessed by the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit. They see the things of the Lord and then they deny Him. They walk away from Him and reject Him. Then He says there remains no room for repentance for them. For Esau the day of grace had been closed.

When do we know that the day of grace closes? It is at death. It is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment but there are a group of people that we don't know who they are. Our job is not to determine who they are but it's to warn us that there are such a group of people. We try to win everybody even people walking away, even those who are there but the warning is that there is a group of people that God sovereignly shuts the day of grace, even before the day of death. That's why Peter says their last state is worse than their first state. What's our first state when we're born into this world? When we're born our spiritual state is that we're dead in our sins. What can be worse than being dead in our sins? What's worse is being dead in your sins with no hope of life, even while we're living.

The third implication from this is there is a big difference between worldly sorrow and Godly repentance. II Corinthians 7:8-11 says worldly sorrow is 'oh my look at the consequences of my sin!' Here is worldly sorrow in my life. When my dad and mom were raising me up they had certain guidelines and if I violated those guidelines there was punishment that came to me afterwards. My dad was not aware of such concepts as time-out or I can't have a milkshake this week but it was warning number one and then comes discipline on number two. When I would get to number two there were moments in my life going down the steps knowing what was coming next and I would say "Oh no

Daddy, I'm so sorry." I wasn't really sorry for what I'd done but I was sorry that I got caught. I knew what was next. There is a big difference over worldly sorrow and the consequences for what a man sows he reaps, and Godly repentance which is sorrow over the sinfulness of sin, for I have sinned against a Thrice Holy God who so loved me that He gave His Son, and I'm wounded to my soul. Esau was upset over the consequences. I lost a birthright. I lost a blessing but true repentance is over the reality of sin.

Here is the last thought. There is a New Testament birthright. Don't sell it. The New Testament birthright is for all who belong to the living God who are born again as the sons of God. The New Testament birthright is found. For instance in John 1:12-13 it says [12] *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* That's your birthright in Jesus Christ. Your birthright in Jesus Christ is a glorious birthright. It is a birthright of a new heart, a new record, a new family, a new life, a new home and it's all purchased at that glorious cross of Christ when the glorious Son of God laid down His life so that you could be born again and given the right of eternal life for He has satisfied the justice of God for you.

Don't sell it. Don't walk away from it for soup. In fact, the New Testament heightens the deal. The New Testament says forget soup or a single meal but what does it profit a man if he gains a whole world and loses his soul? You can say "I'm exhausted with Esau, I want soup, I don't want Jesus." Jesus says "Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy laden." Soup won't give you rest. Illicit sex won't give you rest. Things won't give you rest but Jesus will. I'll give you rest, He says. There is the birthright of heaven from the Lord your God.

My dad went to be with the Lord about four years ago. I sat down with my sisters who said I had to do his funeral which my mom said I had to do also. I worked my way through what I'd say and I kept writing and writing. I began to think about what my birthrights were. My dad taught me how to dress, how to run, how to throw, how to catch, how to play baseball, basketball and football. He taught me how to approach a young lady in order to initiate a conversation. He taught me about the Lord's Day, the Gospel and the way of the Lord. He let me have his name but as much as I appreciate that birthright there's a greater birthright for I have the name of Jesus. I have the right of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

I would love to take this passage and do it with the prodigal son as well but I don't have time here. In that story the younger son went to a far country and the elder son was self righteous when the younger son came back. Here's another one. Don't be the elder brother in Luke 15 but also don't be like the younger brother. You don't have to steal from people to get a birthright for it's a gift of grace from Jesus Christ. Let me tell you what it really means to be the younger brother. Not only do you not steal from people but you take birthright from Christ and you can give to other people. You don't lose it and you can just keep giving it away.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory Divine. Heir of salvation, purchased by God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood for this is my story and this is my song. It's praising my Savior all the day long. One of my favorite hymns is Jesus, What a Friend For Sinners and the last verse says, Jesus! I do now receive Him, More than all in Him I find. He hath granted me forgiveness, (Here's the birthright) I am His, and He is mine. Hallelujah, what a Savior! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. Thank You for the Lord Jesus who is ready to receive us who get exhausted by sin and self. Let us not run to any other gods but to the One true and living God, Jesus Christ, for to me to live is Christ. Dear friend if you have never come to Christ and you may be involved in the covenant community but you have to have that relationship with Jesus Christ for you must be born again. If you want to pray with someone please contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. Say, "Oh Lord, I give up the death wish of this world for the birthright of life in Christ and I do it gladly for Jesus." Father, may we declare the honor of our family name for we exalt Christ. May we embrace the resources for in Christ there are more than ten thousand joys and may we give away the right to others day by day and moment by moment as we see people who need the Lord and thank You O Lord, for finding us. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.