

LVI. Genesis in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of Christ from Genesis
“The Legacy and Lessons from the Life of Esau”
Genesis 36
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We are now in the study of the life of Esau from the book of Genesis. We will start by looking at the first few verses of Genesis 36. Genesis 36:1–5 says [1] *These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom). [2] Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, [3] and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. [4] And Adah bore to Esau, Eliphaz; Basemath bore Reuel; [5] and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, this is the Word of our God, and it abides forever and remember in this text, all Scripture is inspired and profitable, even Genesis 36. The Word of the Lord abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

Before we take a closer look at this text let me explain why this text is in the Bible. Did you know that there are two kinds of people in this world? You who love cats know that what I'm about to say is the truth. There is a direct relationship to someone's IQ and the amount of time they spent thinking up a name for their cat. It really does not matter. You can call your cat by whatever name you want to for it will always be the same response or no response. You think that you're your cat's master but actually you are on your cat's staff. There are cat people and there are dog people.

Now dog people are different. I just wanted to be as good as my dog thought I was. When I would come home my dog would shake all over. I could just see him saying “Just pet me, pet me, look at me, look at me.” Have you ever seen a cat do that? You pet your dog, feed your dog and play with your dog and your dog looks up at you and is thinking “Oh my master is so good to me! He must be god.” First of all you can't walk your cat. You certainly can try. Secondly, you can't wash your cat for you'd be in trouble then. Your cat may or may not eat when you put the food out there. Let's say you do everything you can for your cat and perchance your cat might look at you. If you're cat looks at you this is what your cat is thinking, “My master is so good to me, I must be god.” That's the truth but no emails, please. You can pray for me but no emails.

That's exactly the way people are in this world. When we started in our study of Genesis we saw that the book of Genesis is divided into ten books. They are all introduced with this phrase, “A book of the generations of...” We have come to the ninth book of Genesis with one more to go and the tenth book will start in Genesis 37 which is on the life of Jacob and with the focus on the life of Joseph. The ninth book is on the book of Esau. Why is Esau in here? Why the life of Ishmael back in Genesis 27? They were outside the covenant and they were unbelievers. So why is their life included?

In both cases, Ishmael in comparison to Isaac and Esau in comparison to Jacob the things you'll notice is that they have a bigger family, more land, more money, more power and initially have more influence. In other words, God's kindness, patience, His common grace has done many things for them but it has not moved them to worship the

Lord. It has moved them to the arrogance of self. This whole life of Esau is then displayed for us in this book.

I have about 18 commentaries on Genesis at home and about half of those skip this chapter in Genesis. When I commit to expositional preaching I can't skip it and all Scripture is profitable. There is something here. When you study this chapter you find this chapter has two trajectories (implications) that land in the Old Testament and two trajectories (implications) that land in the New Testament. So let's take a look at what is before us.

When I was growing up my mother had sayings and I was absolutely convinced that the way she said them with such authority that they were all found in the Bible. For instance she would say "Cleanliness is next to godliness." I couldn't find this in my Bible but it was quoted as if it was the Bible. There is another one that is in the Bible in the book of Numbers and my mother quotes this one a lot particularly when I was in High School, "Son, your sins will find you out." That is a Biblical truth and it will happen. That passage is in the Bible because of this. Ultimately what a man truly believes will eventually be manifested in his life.

In God's common grace external appearances may masquerade for a while but ultimately and finally, given enough time, what a man really is will shine through the façade and break through the façade and you'll see what a man really believes. Our sin will find us out. Our sin will eventually be manifested in our life and its consequences and so it is with Esau. So we don't make judgments on appearances initially. No the issue of life is the issue of the heart and the life of a man will eventually show the heart of a man.

The text we started off with in Genesis 36:1–5 is the life of Esau in the land of Promise in Canaan. There in the land of Canaan he married three women. None of them were in the Godly line. All of them were outside of the Godly line. Put in the New Testament language, Esau did not marry in the Lord. He married pagans, Canaanites, Hivites and Ishmaelites. Then God still allowed him to have children and in fact a number of them.

This man Esau who despised his birthright then ended up despising the land of Promise and he left it. When the occasion came with the difficulties of how much he owned and how much Jacob owned he took everything and went invaded another country called the land of Seir. In Genesis 36:1–5 we saw the life and times of Esau in the Promised Land and in Genesis 36:6–43 we see Esau's life and times in Seir which is divided up into three sections.

Genesis 36:6–19 says [6] *Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went into a land away from his brother Jacob. [7] For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock. [8] So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)*

[9] These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. [10] These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. [11] The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. [12] (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

[13] These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. [14] These are the sons of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

[15] These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, [16] Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. [17] These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: the chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah; these are the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

[18] These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: the chiefs Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; these are the chiefs born of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. [19] These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs.

You will notice the constant repetition of the fact that Esau is Edom and that's being done for a purpose and it won't end here. Here you find the expansion of Esau's family after they leave the Promised Land and move to the land of Canaan. As they arrive in the land of Seir, Edomia, his family continues to expand but when they got to the land the land was occupied. There were people living in the land and in the next section are those who were conquered by Esau and assimilated under his rule as he took over Edom.

Genesis 36:20–30 says [20] These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, [21] Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. [22] The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna. [23] These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. [24] These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah; he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of Zibeon his father. [25] These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah. [26] These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. [27] These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. [28] These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. [29] These are the chiefs of the Horites: the chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, [30] Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, chief by chief in the land of Seir.

That was the population Esau conquered and took over in the land of Seir and that was added to his clan. The third section includes the kings and chiefs in the area. Before Israel ever had a king the Edomites will have had eight kings. Here they are as we bring this ninth book to a conclusion in the life of Esau.

Genesis 36:31–43 says [31] These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. [32] Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city being Dinhabah. [33] Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. [34] Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. [35] Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his place, the name of his city being Avith. [36] Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. [37] Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates reigned in his place. [38] Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place. [39] Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his place, the name of his city being Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

[40] These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their clans and their dwelling places, by their names: the chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, [41] Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, [42] Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, [43] Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession.

It would be interesting to take these names and trace them out as Israel intersects with these individuals. I don't have time for all of that but a for instance is there is a man listed by the name of Uz and he has land. Later on in the Bible we will study a man from the land of Uz and his name is Job. The kings began to be identified with pagan gods and their names such as Baal which refers to Baal worship. There is the downward spiral even though there is the enlargement of property and enlargement of land that is much bigger than the land of Canaan and the Promised Land. It spreads way out from the descendants of Esau in the land of Edom.

From this text there are three things that we need to note for our lives and ministry as believers and as a church. The first takeaway from this text is the ultimate depth of a depraved heart is many times signaled by seemingly insignificant acts of sin. When you see an iceberg seven times as much of that iceberg is under the ocean and not seen. A man's heart is like that. We love the insignificant sins where we say "Oh it's just a little white lie" or "He meant well" or "It was a half truth." A half-truth is a whole lie. In fact we love to use euphemisms. We don't use the word adultery, we use the word affair. We don't use the words of rebellion against God in sexual ways like sodomy or homosexual but we use the word 'gay.' We're always looking for euphemisms to tone down sin to make it insignificant. Sometimes the insignificant act, in fact, many times is revelatory of a depraved, broadening, deepening heart of rebellion.

Back in Genesis 28 Jacob stole the birthright from Esau by selling him some soup. That may seem like a pretty insignificant act but Genesis 28 tends to clue us in. It doesn't say he was so hungry that Esau made a bad deal. It said that Esau despised his birthright. It wasn't that he just had a food addiction or that he got caught in the weakness of a moment. The Bible tells you it reeks of his rebellion and that it was the despising of his birthright.

As we take that passage and Genesis 36 as it describes Esau and his descendants, we take the trajectory into the New Testament and the New Testament builds our understanding. It was more than a meal and it was more than even despising the birthright. That was just a tip of an iceberg. Let's look at Hebrews 12. In Hebrews 12 there are exhortations to Christians about how we need to walk strong in the Lord. We are saved by grace but we need to be strong in the grace of the Lord.

Hebrews 12:12–17 says *[12] Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, [13] and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. [14] Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (Now he turns from you being strong in your walk with the Lord to your ministry with others.) [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 is Esau and we follow through on his life and include what it says here in the New Testament we find out that this selling of the birthright and the despising of the birthright is just a tip of an iceberg. In fact, here is a man of depravity, sexual immorality, unholiness and profanity is what governed his entire life. I know that God's grace is greater than all our sins and that you can be forgiven of all of your sins if you confess them and I know none of us will walk through this life with perfection, but never look at any sin as insignificant. You don't know what all it's attached to. Satan doesn't advertise high handed sin. He advertises a mistake, an addiction, a psychological mishap. When in reality sin is to be hated. Praise God I'm forgiven of it. Praise God I can come to Him freely because my landing in heaven is not based upon my righteousness, but praise God on the way I can hate sin. When I'm ministering to others I should never treat any sin and ministry to them as insignificant. I don't know what all it's attached to.

So here we see a man who despised his birthright, despised the land, and who is sexually immoral. As we read the text it's actually hard to find out how many wives he really had. I know he had at least three but he could have had as many as six, but what drew him to those women had nothing to do with a righteous search for a righteous wife. It had everything to do with sexual desires and sexual immorality. He was a man who took what he wanted and got what he obtained. He even got pagan gods from his pagan wives that infiltrated his legacy, his seed, his line so that by the time kings come from him these leaders are sold out to paganism, even taking the names of pagan gods upon themselves.

The second takeaway from this text is Godly repentance is a precious gift of God's grace and worldly sorrow is no substitute. There came a time when Esau wept over his sin but it wasn't his sin he was weeping over. It was the consequences. It was a worldly sorrow and not a Godly repentance in which the hatred of sin and the sinfulness of sin is there. I was reading a sermon by Alexander White on this passage of Scripture for the puritans didn't dodge this text. I've always kind of liked Esau because he seemed like a man's man. He is a man whose arrow finds a target and his feet find the way. Where he walks he walks with confidence. He is a man of courage, bravery, confidence and can even show family benevolence with a brother who has made him mad. He is a man who is a leader and produces leaders. He takes an entire country and incorporates the people of that country under his rule. He is a man who is successful. He is a man who is arrogant, depraved and who will not acknowledge the Lord of glory in worship but will follow the dead end of self-worship and self-exaltation.

Let's look at Philippians 3. Here is a description of Esau. 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.* (Get good mentors, Godly mentors for those who don't will fall under verse 18.) [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.*

This past week I went to the General Assembly in Memphis, Tennessee. I did two things I thought I would never do in my life. I am now here to make confession. I'm going to be transparent and vulnerable. One is I went to a restaurant there and Memphis dry rub ribs. I can't believe I was unfaithful to Eastern North Carolina barbeque. I have done it once but I'll never do it again. The second thing I did was I went to Graceland, the home of Elvis. I will never do that again either. There were other teaching elders

from the Presbytery in line with me and they said “I’m sure glad to see you here.” I said, “I’m actually doing sermon research.”

What an interesting life Elvis had. Even in that day and time you could tell he had everything – acclaim, fame, adoration, money, possessions, people who did his bidding. He dies as god as his appetite in the shame of sin, what an end of a life of an unbelievably by God’s common grace, gifted man and then his legacy. Why is it we look to the people who live for the things of this world and they are actually able to get almost all of it? These people have multiple marriages, broken homes, children that won’t speak to them, therapists, medication to get up in the morning and go to bed at night, and somehow these who have “everything” we think if we could just have a little of that, that would make our lives.

Why will we not set our mind on heavenly things and the things of eternity? Esau has it all but his god is his appetite. His passions and his appetites rule him. Everything he has becomes a reason for arrogance, rebellion, profanity and unholiness and he is not granted repentance. He has some sorrow over the consequences of what he has done. I want to give you one final thought in conclusion.

The final takeaway is that unless the transforming grace of God intervenes the legacy of sin and the life of an individual will inevitably spiral downward in the succeeding generations. Please do not make judgments about where people are spiritually in light of where they are in the circumstances of life, prosperity of life, or the material things of life. Here is a man that looks like the prosperity gospel has taken hold of him. Here is a man that seemingly has everything.

I get so overwhelmed at thinking of taking the Gospel of Christ and now finding it in terms of coming to Jesus and the prosperity of this world is the result. When you come to Christ He may entrust things to you but there are a lot of people who don’t know Him like Esau who had more than the people of God. Don’t look at external circumstances or the absence of adversity or the presence of prosperity. There are many times God’s people are not given things but call to poverty, call to death or call to martyrdom. It has been granted unto us to suffer for His name sake so don’t make judgments on external circumstances or material resources.

What is in the heart of a man is what will ultimately come out in the life of a man. When the heart is arrogant and rebellious it will not only show up in his life where his sin will find him out but it will show up in the succeeding generations unless God’s transforming grace intervenes. That is exactly what happened here to Esau in Genesis 36. The same man who the Holy Spirit inspired to write the book of Genesis to give you the account of Esau will encounter the legacy of Esau, the Edomites. His name is Moses. He will be leading the people of Israel back to the Promised Land for 400 years of slavery and on their way back they take a route called the King’s Highway. On the King’s Highway they go through a place called Edom. When they come to Edom in Petra the Edomites say “No, you can’t come through” and they are ready for the Israelites to perish in the wilderness. Five hundred years after Esau the legacy of sin is still there. Esau had been kind to Jacob but Esau’s descendants were ready for the people of God to perish in the wilderness. Therefore a trajectory to the Old Testament is there was a book written promising judgment on Esau and the Edomites and it is called the book of Obadiah.

Years after that there will be a country called Babylon and they will come down to capture the people of Israel to take them away to the Babylonian captivity but it’s a

hard job and they don't feel like coming that far to capture that Israel nation. So they will enter into an alliance and a coalition with the Edomites and they will do the dirty work of the Babylonians to take the people of Israel into captivity. Another book in the Bible will be written taking up verses in a chapter devoted to God's promised judgment upon Edom because they had been the handmaiden of evil to take the people of God into Babylonian captivity and that is found in Malachi 1:2-5. Another 500 years go by and there will be a king who comes from the line of Esau whose name is Herod the Edomean. In his opposition to the Seed of God he will attempt to kill the Son of God, the Messiah. That was the legacy of Esau, Herod.

There are two things you can do with this. One is you can look at the line of Esau and say "God I'm certainly glad I'm not like that." Or you can realize that's where we were but God's transforming grace came in and saved us. Now will that transforming grace reach in and save us or will it reach through us who it saved and we'll reach to the Esau's of this world. There are people from the line of Esau in the neighborhood. Would you not bring them to church on the Lord's Day? I know we're committed to world missions but what are we doing in Birmingham, our city? Will you share your faith to see God turn lines of Esau's into lines of redemptions? Will you reach into a family and take hold of a father who will say "Sin stops here in my family"? Grace is what we look to reign now and forevermore. That is what our church is here for.

There was an 8 to 9 year old boy in the 1930s who lived in a shot gun house. Everyone called his grandmother 'mammy.' There were twenty plus people who lived in that shot gun house. Because she could not read, when he would get home from school he would have to open up his Bible and read to her for fifteen to thirty minutes before he could go out and play. When he was finished he was hoping she would say to her grandson "Alright you can go out and play" but she never did. She would always say "Now we're going to pray." He would say "oh no" because when she prayed it was everybody in the family. The carpet rug would come out, she would kneel, she would put him down beside her, put her arm around him and say "Let's pray." They would go through all of her children and they would pray, 'mammy's prayers.'

The result of her prayers was that all nine of her sons became Christians and both daughters plus her husband who at the time would make Esau look like a piker but came to Christ before he died. How do I know about these people? Mammy was my great grandmother. I was born into lines of Esau's but a woman of God no matter what was being brought against her, with her husband's unfaithfulness, rebellion and drunkenness, she went to her knees. She called to the Lord of glory and she became a spokesman for Christ. Of those nine children one of them was named Harry Lloyd Reeder senior and he came to Christ. Then a Harry Lloyd Reeder junior came along who was the little boy who was kneeling beside her, my dad. Then I came to Christ.

There is nothing special about that story except that it is God's grace and it's written in the lines of the people here but perhaps you're reading this today and it hasn't been written for you yet. You just come. The land of Edom isn't where you want to be. There are riches, power, legacy, names and you can dominate a lot of people but over here is heavenly success, not worldly things. God can use you to bring heaven to earth, the saving grace of Jesus Christ and all you need to do is just call upon Him.

I don't want us to rest. This needs to be a mammy church, where we're praying for the lost by name, we're bringing them here to hear the Gospel, we're going through

our neighborhoods and praying for them to come to Christ. Start a Bible study in your neighborhood to invite those in to help them discover who Jesus Christ is. In other words, we're not going to look at the Esau's of this world and get angry, we're going to be moved by grace to thank God He has saved us out of it and then how God used me to rescue the perishing and the Esau's disappear, glory comes and God uses us. What glorious grace our God has! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the glorious moments we could be together. Think through the implications of what we've just studied about seemingly insignificant sin, thanking God that He has given you the gift of Godly repentance and not worldly sorrow. If you have never come to Christ pray this way "O Savior, You who died on the cross for me, thank You! I come to Thee. I turn from my sin and put my trust in You alone. Save me. Stop the legacy of sin which brings destruction. I do not want the appetites of this world to dominate me nor the things of this world. I want to set my eyes on Jesus. I come." Now Father, move upon us. God, may we not be satisfied to be saved by grace but to be instruments for the salvation of others. Who is it around us that could be sitting with us in a Sunday school class, a small group Bible study or in a worship service? Who is it we could share a book with or pray for in our family, in our neighborhood, or among our friends? God please bring the Gospel to bear upon Birmingham, not the cultural gospel where we just show up for church but the radical Gospel of Jesus Christ where men and women are moved by the Spirit of God, love the Word of God and lift up the Son of God. Bring that testimony here and allow us to be used. Here we are, send us, in Jesus' Name, Amen.