

Esau: A Careless Man's Foolish Bargain

Genesis 25:19-34

Jacob and Esau

¹⁹ This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹ Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless.

The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²² The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So, she went to inquire of the LORD.

²³ The LORD said to her,

*"Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you will be separated;
one people will be stronger than the other,
and the older will serve the younger."*

²⁴ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷ The boys grew up, and Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. ²⁸ Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)

³¹ Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

³² "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

³³ But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So, he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left.

So, Esau despised his birthright.

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A. Introduction

1. We hear a lot about 'freedom of choice' these days.
2. The very word 'choice' presupposes at least two alternatives.
3. In Joshua 24:15 (*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve*), the choice he gave them was between God and the false god, Baal.
4. Before waiting for their reply, Joshua announced his choice,
5. "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*"
6. Choices are offered throughout the Bible, & daily throughout our lives.
7. God commands man to make many daily choices.
8. But He gives us enough information to make the choices informed ones.
9. God has given us information about Himself, including:
 - a. His holiness,
 - b. man's sinfulness,
 - c. God's provision for that sin,
 - d. Jesus Christ,
10. He also gives scores of promises to man about the benefits of accepting God's promises and what will happen if he does not.
11. Isn't it amazing that common sense isn't all that common.
12. Really, a common thread in many decisions is that they don't make sense.
13. Esau's life was filled with choices he must have regretted bitterly.
14. He appears to be a person who found it hard to consider consequences.
15. He had trouble thinking ahead.
16. He reacted to the need of the rather than the future.
17. Trading his birthright for a bowl of stew was a clear example of this.
18. What are you willing to trade for the things you want?

B. Sometimes We Can Be Impatient With God's Program

1. We can learn so much from short passages in Scripture.
2. The character of two men is especially revealed in this brief story.
3. Now Jacob knew what God planned to do.
 - a. Gen 25:23: *The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."*
 - b. Without doubt this was revealed to Jacob by Rebekah.
4. Jacob chose to handle it his own way.
5. In v31-34 we see Jacob had already taken Esau's birthright.
6. Then he conspired with Rebekah to rob Esau of his blessing as well.
 - a. This shows there was something mean and debased about Jacob.
 - b. Jacob sought a result but using dubious means.

7. Jacob really lost out because of his methods.
 - a. He had to run away & couldn't enjoy any of the benefits of his actions.
 - b. He had to work for Laban for 20 years.
 - c. On return, he was afraid of Esau's reaction to seeing him.
 - d. When he last saw him, Esau wanted to kill him.
 - e. Jacob was forced to honour Esau by giving him stock & slaves.
 - f. He had to wait for Esau's surrendered the land.
 - g. Gen 36:6-8: - *Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the members of his household, as well as his livestock and all his other animals and all the goods he had acquired in Canaan, and moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob. ⁷ Their possessions were too great for them to remain together; the land where they were staying could not support them both because of their livestock. ⁸ So Esau (that is, Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.*
 - h. Faith involves living without scheming.

C. Tragic Indifference Toward Relating Values

1. Jacob might look bad, but Esau comes out worse: (v. 34)
2. In Malachi 1:1-4 we read:

*1 A prophecy: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi.
Israel Doubts God's Love*

*² "I have loved you," says the Lord.
"But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'"*

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob, ³ but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."
3. Hebrews 12:14-17
4. *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears".*
5. Not very complimentary to Esau.

D. What Did Esau Give Up?

1. What was the nature of Esau's birthright?
2. It gave Esau the privilege of being the head of the house.
3. It effectively made him the family priest.
4. At least until the priestly line of Aaron was established.

5. It enabled him to offer sacrifices for the family.
6. As the firstborn he was in the direct line of Abraham, through whom blessing was to come.
7. The flaw in Esau's evaluations.
 - a. He valued the seen over the unseen.
 - b. He valued the temporary more than the permanent.
 - c. He valued the material ahead of the spiritual.
 - d. He sacrificed the permanent on the altar of the immediate.

D. Take Aways

1. We prefer beautiful illusions rather than harsh realities.
2. We choose the present time rather than eternity.
3. We often choose the pleasures of sin for a season, rather than waiting to enjoy the blessings of God forever.
4. God allows certain events in our lives to accomplish his overall purposes, but we are still responsible for our actions.
5. Consequences are important to consider.
6. It is possible to have great anger and yet not sin.
7. Esau was able to forgive after his explosive anger.
8. How much of the spirit of Esau is there in you?