

Beacons of the Bible

Esau

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"Esau despised his birthright." Genesis 25:34

Read the annals of the world. They exhibit sinful parents and their sinful sons. Read the annals of God's chosen seed. It is not an unblemished page. The graceless sit in families of grace. Faith flows not in the stream of human blood. The saints are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13.

Behold the family of Isaac. The members are few. Twin sons share their parent's love. We cannot doubt, that childhood's culture was the same to both. Each would be similarly taught the fear and love of God. But one was a child of darkness--one of light. The Spirit sounds a clear note, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? says the Lord--yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." Mal. 1:2, 3.

Early they show most diverse tastes. Esau's delight was in the fields. Robust exercise was his delight. It was his joy to climb the mountain and to scour the plain. His venison fed Isaac with dainty fare. The quiet Jacob cared not to leave the tents. Near to his home he watched the flocks. He lived beneath the mother's eye, and thus secured the mother's heart. She, also, would often ponder the divine announcement, "The elder shall serve the younger." Genesis 25:23. She would anticipate her beloved's sure pre-eminence. Such the domestic picture of the patriarch's home.

A memorable day arrives. Jacob had gathered some red beans, and had boiled them into porridge. Esau suddenly appears, faint from the chase, and ravenous for food. The lentils are prepared. His appetite is keen. Desire is strong. His strength is exhausted. Rapidly--impatiently--voraciously he cries, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew you've made." verse 30. Jacob's besetting sin quickly appears. He presents no generous gift. He shows no readiness to renovate his worn-out brother. His thought is wholly selfish. He keenly marks his opportunity. He coldly trades with his advantage. He makes unnatural merchandise of his red stew. He knows the birthright is with the elder. But now he can tempt the elder to surrender it. His lips frame the base proposal, "Sell me this day your birthright." verse 31.

The weary Esau took counsel only of weak flesh. He felt his strength was quivering in life's socket. "Behold I am at the point to die." Without this food I must expire. The birthright cannot extend my days. I speedily go hence, "and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" verse 32. The calculating Jacob urges his famished brother. The barter must have the ratification of oath. "Swear to me this day." Hesitation ceases. Appetite prevails. "He swore unto him--and he sold his birthright unto Jacob." verse 33.

The base bargain is complete. Jacob gives payment of his bread and stew. The profane Esau greedily devours. He gives no sign of penitence or shame. He shows no grief for his degraded state. He mourns not his primogeniture thus lost. He is as lighthearted as before. "He did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way." verse 34. He bears, indeed, another name to mark the transaction. "Therefore was his name called Edom." verse 30. "Thus Esau despised his birthright." verse 34.

What is *God's verdict* of this deed? The Holy Spirit is not silent. He brands it as "godless." It bears forever the stigma of impious disdain of sacred privilege. It is black with the guilt of trampling holy things beneath the foot of scorn. "Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau. He traded his birthright as the oldest son for a single meal." Hebrews 12:16

What were these rights of the first-born? Scripture gives clear intimations. There was temporal pre-eminence. He was endowed with a double portion of territorial possession. There were, moreover, spiritual privileges. In patriarchal family the firstborn had distinguished dignity. He was revered as ruler in the house. To him belonged the teacher's chair. And until Divine appointment limited the priestly office to the line of Aaron, he discharged the holy functions of religion. These rights were heaven's own grant, and therefore to be highly prized. Rashly to relinquish them was to disdain the ordinance of God. It was profane to think lightly of all-wise decree.

But in the family of Abraham the birthright granted much more. The wondrous promise of Canaan was linked to it. The firstborn was the heir of this domain. The spiritual import of this land was seen by faith. "All these faithful ones died without receiving what God had promised them, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed the promises of God. They agreed that they were no more than foreigners and nomads here on earth. And obviously people who talk like that are looking forward to a country they can call their own. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them." Hebrews 11:13-14, 16. Thus to despise the birthright involved contempt of the celestial kingdom.

There was more than this. "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18. The great Redeemer shall be Abraham's lineal

offspring. When the grand Deliverer shall arise to roll back the curse--to cancel sin--to give adoption to God's family--to perfect salvation, He shall be Abraham's heir. Oh! wondrous privilege! Oh! transcendent pre-eminence! To be progenitor of a long line of mighty monarchs is an empty bubble compared to such glory. To sell the birthright is to barter more than angelic honor!

Thus Esau was godless. We read--we marvel--we pity--we condemn. We reason, surely never was folly like this folly! This sin surpasses sin! But, Reader! perhaps you are this man. The race of Esau yet lives, and will live, until the Lord returns. Do not multitudes profanely scorn the glorious privileges and prospects of Christ's Gospel? He calls by the ministry. He invites in the Word. They care not to hear. He sends repeated messages to tell of the rich inheritance. "They despise the pleasant land. They believe not his word." Ps. 106:24. Ambassadors cry aloud. "We beseech you in Christ's stead." They respond, No, no, we rather choose earth's emptiest pottage. Ah! fools! Ah! worse than fools!

If any Esau should read this page, may the Beacon touch his besotted heart! May the good Spirit open his eyes to see the riches of the glory which is thus scorned! It is a noble prayer, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him--the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Eph. 1:17, 18. Let us not cease to press the petition until the answer fully come. The prospect is a boundless ocean of supremest joys. The eye is dazzled. No tongue of men or angels can tell the half. The believer feels, but his full heart cannot give utterance.

Among these treasures, the most sparkling gem is total obliteration of all sin. Who can tell the ecstatic rapture to an accusing mind to know that the blood of the Cross thoroughly wipes out every stain! Who can depict the relief to a burdened conscience, when the assurance comes, that the all-searching eye no more discerns a speck of guilt! Ten thousand worlds are dust, compared to the faithful saying, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow--though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. 1:18; and again, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. 31:34.

In the catalogue other blessings without number shine. There is refuge from the law's tremendous curse. This curse is rightly due to every breach of the pure code of love. But it is all expended on the surety-head of Jesus. The avenging sword is buried in His breast. Heaven is now thrown open, and it is a blaze of love. There is the joy of reconciliation--the serene delight of looking up to God, as a Father arrayed in loving smiles. There is adoption into His family. There is no more distance or estrangement, but heirdom of heaven--joint-heirdom with Christ.

To believers the pledge is given, "All things are yours--things present and things

to come." Life is yours, that you may receive grace. Death is yours, that you may be crowned with glory. Providences are yours, that all things may work together for your good. Angels are yours, to encamp around your path, and to render unseen, but not less certain, ministry. A throne of grace is yours, that you may boldly tell out all your fears, and all your need, and find supplies of mercy and support. The glorious Word is yours, to teach--to warn--to comfort. All the precious promises are yours--at every moment inviting you to the brightest of bright prospects. God's righteousness is yours, to cover all your defilement. It is so pure, that Omniscience can discern no flaw. It is so worthy, that God throughout eternity cannot sufficiently reward. The Holy Spirit is yours, to open your eyes to your own deformity--to reveal the full glories of the great Redeemer--to unstop your ears to hear His wooing voice--to expand your heart to receive Him in all His fullness--to quicken you to serve Him with all your powers--to strengthen you to resist temptation's wiles--and to love holiness with all your soul and might. What can a sinner need, which shines not in the Gospel! What can God bestow, which is not pledged and laid up in Jesus for all who cleave to Him in faith!

Reader! despise not such inestimable good. Barter it not for unsubstantial pleasures, which perish while you touch. What can present a rivalry? Is it the allurements of sense? They who grovel in such mire, sink to the level of the beasts and brutes. Are you tempted by the glittering bait of earthly honor--are you seeking to touch the pinnacle of human fame, and to receive the incense of poor man's applause? Do riches captivate? Bring forth the righteous scales. In one heap all these baubles. Pile them up high. Let all the glory of the world be gathered. In the other place "the unsearchable riches of Christ"--"the exceeding weight of glory"--"the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore"--"the righteous crown, which fades not away." Say, which scale prevails!

Sell not such wealth for a mere nothing. Suppose you gain these worldly trifles to the utmost limit of desire. Suppose your cup of honors, wealth, and sensual joys to overflow. How long will the possession please? Sicknes--disease--appear. Means of enjoyment fail. The airy phantom vanishes. The bubble bursts. Misery bewails, "I have grasped a shadow."

Let it be granted, that you quaff this goblet with strength unimpaired through years of marvelous extent. But what is the longest life?--a span--a hair's-breadth--a vapor. What is your final profit? Think of the death-bed without hope--the grave without redemption--the judgment-seat without a plea for pardon--eternity without salvation--the soul departing without Christ. Think of the never-dying anguish--the tortures of the upbraiding conscience. Ah! the bitterness of the reflection, 'Once the cross was erected in my view, and Christ was preached, and heaven depicted. But I despised the Gospel-tidings. I bartered my soul, and scorned the heavenly portion.'

Remember, also, your choice is free. The tempter may tempt--but he cannot

compel. Seductions may be strong--but motives to resist are stronger far. You are self-slain when you prefer the pottage to Christ. Jesus drags to light self-will as the misleading traitor, "You WILL not come unto me that you might have life." John 5:40. It is your deliberate cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Not Christ--not holiness--not heaven--but this world, and this world's flimsy tinsel.

Esau speaks once more. It is a voice of keenest anguish. Rebekah and Jacob conspire to rob him of his father's blessing. When he knew his loss, "he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. Have you but one blessing, O my father? bless me, even me also, O my father; and Esau lifted up his voice, and wept." Genesis 27:34-38. It is now too late. "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. 12:17.

The hour will come when the door of mercy will be shut--when the gates of blessing can no more open--when prayer is no more heard--when wrestling entreaties avail nothing--when tears no more can move, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Prov. 1:28. But that day is not yet fully come. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Rev. 3:20. Open quickly. Tomorrow it may be too late. Another call invites you. Heed it. Oh, heed it. It may be the last.

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