

Heritage Smeritage! Esau Sells His Birthright

Genesis 25.27-34

It might have been nice if Abraham's descendants had exemplified godly character, but the first account reveals a dysfunctional family, a desire to satisfy our basic appetites, and manipulating a weakness for our own advantage. The 'biggest loser'? Esau.

- The 'canvas of life': Living by our senses (27-28)
Two boys: A free spirit and an ambitious homebody
The parents pick favorites – blueprint for ruin
- A very bad deal: Where natural appetites (29-33)
Esau trades his birthright for a bowl of 'red stuff'
Jacob's trap ensnares his 'hungry animal' brother
- Bad priorities lead to spiritual ruin (34; cf. Heb. 12.16-17)
Esau treats his birthright as something worthless
Esau regretted his action, but could never undo it

Lessons for my Journey of Faith

Resisting being controlled by my appetites is a battle in life
Short-term gratification leads to loss of long-term rewards
Beware 'stepping on others' to get what you want



1. The first 'episode' in the epic drama of Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau reveals an intrinsic propensity toward sin. The family of promise cannot escape the infection of depravity. If we were writing the story of biblical heroes, we would paint them with 'heroic' colors and as paragons of virtue, like other tales from ancient mythology. But this isn't myth: It's true history, and as such it records real people, 'warts and all.' Reflect on this for a time: What does the presence of sin in God's patriarchal family tell us about His grace?
2. Let's get practical: What 'fleshly' tendencies do you see in each character in Genesis 25.27-34? What motivated each of them to do what they did? How does selfishness and faithlessness show itself in each of them? Now let's get personal: How are similar motivations and actions reflected in your life? As the story of Jacob and Esau unfolds in Genesis, the detrimental effects of their moral failings are played out. What effects will the way you are living today have in your future life?
3. An often-overlooked part of this story concerns the character of Jacob. As his name portended, he was a wily conniver. He knew Esau lived to satisfy his appetites and often came home hungry, so he 'set him up' for failure. While Jacob desired something of worth (the birthright), his method of getting it was deceitful. The two brothers are a mirror image of each other! How do we sometimes pursue spiritual goals in 'unspiritual' ways?
4. A godly heritage is a priceless thing, but it is no guarantee that a person will live for the Lord. As Esau shows, living to satisfy his appetites led him to view the most important things in life with contempt. What godly heritage do you have? It could be your family, but often it's not. What 'faith resources' has God brought into your life? Don't fret about what you *don't* have; focus on what God has blessed you with, and determine to use your heritage for eternal rewards.