

Do you ever feel that if anyone found out the truth about you... you'd be finished? ... Do you go through life basically trying to convince others that you are something you're not — such as... that you're cooler than you know you are... that you're very confident or skillful or good-hearted when you know it's not so... that you are more spiritual than you know you are...?

According to Moya Sarner a journalist at *The Guardian*... this deadly sin is more present in our everyday lives than ever before... thanks to social media. ... She writes that not only do we compare ourselves to friends and neighbors (as people have always done)... but now... online... we measure up against people all over the globe... celebrities and strangers... friends of friends. ... One therapist... has coined this “comparisonitis”... an *emotional* sickness which can't be intellectualized or curbed by willpower.

Ethan Kross, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan writes, “*envy is being taken to an extreme.*” We are constantly bombarded by “Photoshopped lives”... he says, “*and that exerts a toll on us the likes of which we have never experienced in the history of our species.* ... While we are busy finding the perfect camera angle... our lives become a dazzling... flawless hard-shell exterior... with an empty inside that is craving the envy of others.

Have you noticed the new television ads for the latest iphone...? I think that they have coined a new word and are using it as their only selling point for the product they are pushing very hard. “Slofies” is the term they use for the phone's slow motion video capabilities. They are trying to make

slow-motion video selfies look cool... and turn it into a cool and popular craze. ... Keep up with your friends... or... be the first in your social media circle to create a new and exciting image of yourself.

Yet I am sure you would all agree with me... when I say this: *“It’s What You Can’t See That Matters.”* ... It is as the Apostle Paul wrote in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians and in Colossians...

**2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)**

*as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

**Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)**

*<sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

I know... that you probably realize that “it’s what you **can’t** see that matters”... but isn’t it so easy for us to get caught up with the rest of the world... (that makes outward appearance the measure of success and happiness)... and we live as though the opposite was true (that it is what everyone sees that is important)...?

This morning... our passage of Scripture has a message to impact us with a message that says: *“It’s What You Can’t See That Matters.”* We are about to observe what looks like obvious success... but turns out that it really isn’t. ... Even your ***initial look*** at today’s chapter in Genesis will begin to communicate this message. What you see (at first) is that it’s a genealogy. It is a list of about 40 names... who are the descendants of Esau.

Many people when they come to a chapter like Genesis 36 in their Bibles... (where all they see is strange name... after strange name)... they quickly rush through it with little to no hope that there might be a blessing to be discovered. ... (Now... I am going to be very honest.) Two weeks ago... I asked my wife... and I also asked the elders... to please pray for me... because I knew this 43-verse chapter of Esau's genealogy was coming up... and I did not know if God wanted me to preach on this chapter... or just jump over to chapter 37.

On Monday... when I usually start the formal research and study of the next passage that I will preach on... I initiated the process with Genesis chapter 37. But then I felt guilty... because of a conviction that I have about God's Word.

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)**

*<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Knowing that “*all Scripture*” includes genealogies... I knew that I should at least say something. ... So turning my attention to the 36<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis... I discovered that it had **several** things to say... one of them being: “*It's What You Can't See That Matters.*” ... I will make this point clear... from our passage in just a little while. ... And right alongside of it... I will be making several other practical points... that our passage contains for us to be blessed with... by giving our attention to Esau's family line... here in Genesis 36. ... So please bear with me... as I read these strange-sounding names. (I will probably slaughter many of them.) But in doing

so... watching me struggle... might keep you slightly amused... and I promise you... there will be payoff by hanging in there with me.

Now... in order to recognize the points that I want to show you... there are **FOUR** things that I should cover first. (It is going to take me a little while to set these lessons up. So it will be somewhat of a long introduction... before I get to our passage. So please bear with me...)

**Number One** – The human author of Genesis (Moses)... went out of his way to show us that Esau (the twin brother of Jacob)... is identified with Edom. He is the father of the Edomites.

### **Genesis 36: 1... 8... 9... 19... 43**

Moses did not want any of us to miss the fact that Esau is Edom!

**Number Two** – You should know that (tragically)... the Edomites would become hardened enemies of Israel. ... Some five hundred years after Esau's departure... (when Moses was leading Israel's exodus from Egypt)... the Edomites refused the peaceful offers of Moses... and would not allow Israel to pass through their territories (Numbers 20:14-21). ... And then... much later... when Saul became king of Israel... he had to fight the Edomites (1 Samuel 14:47). ... King David also had to battle them as enemies (2 Sam. 8:13-14). ... But the most infamous altercation between Israel and Esau's descendants came when Israel was being carted off to Babylonia as their slaves. Many Israelites tried to escape from their human torture. As the Babylonian forces marched down from the North... they fled South... where the Edomites blocked the crossroads (cutting off their route)... and delivered them back to the Babylonians. ... This bitter

treatment by their cousins... is the subject of several invective tirades by the prophets... against the Edomites (Malachi... Jeremiah... and the entire book of Obadiah.)

But... the ultimate tragedy of the animosity between Israel and the descendants of Esau is this: It was an Edomite king... (Herod the Great)... who exterminated the babies of Bethlehem... in his attempt to kill the King of Kings (Matthew 2). ... The ULTIMATE son of Jacob... and the definitive son of Esau... (King Herod... and Jesus Christ the King) ... all ties back to the chapter before us today... as we marvel at God's sovereign hand... down through history.

**Number Three** – (Here are a few helpful little reminders about Esau.) God had a plan for Esau and his family – BEFORE Esau was even born! When Esau and his twin brother Jacob were in their mother's womb... they struggled violently with each other. Rebekah wanted to know what was happening and so she prayed... and God answered her.

**Genesis 25:23 (ESV)**

*And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."*

Young Esau could not see beyond what was in front of him. ... Esau (you will remember)... possessed no vision... no spiritual imagination. ... He had no eyes or mind for God... or for Heaven... or for Hell. ... Spiritual realities were to him dull and cloudy. ... He was a single-dimensional soul. Pleasure was his guiding star. ... For him all that mattered was the excitement of the hunt... a hearty meal... a woman's company — all good things in the proper perspective and place. ... But pleasure is all that Esau

could see. So we saw him despise his birthright... selling it for a single meal... and likewise he despised his heritage... and sought the pleasure of taking Canaanite women for his wives. (Which made his mother and father miserable.) ... Esau's carefree arrogance... brutalized every spiritual advantage he had... as Isaac's son. It turned him away and fixed him on a tragic course... that his genealogy depicts.

After Jacob had stolen their father's blessing from Esau... Esau begged his father for his own blessing. But Isaac recognized God's sovereignty... and so we read this in Genesis 27...

**Genesis 27:39-40 (ESV)**

*<sup>39</sup> Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high. <sup>40</sup> By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck."*

Our chapter this morning shows us that God did indeed prosper Esau and make him into a great nation. (THINK OF IT!)... If a person tries to forget God... (as Esau did)... you would think that God would forget him...! But ... Genesis 36 shows us how God **BLESSED** Esau greatly. ... Never once do we find Esau showing any kind of an interest in spiritual matters. (In fact he despised his birthright... which is a way of saying that he had no regard for spiritual concerns.) YET GOD STILL PROSPERED HIM AND MADE HIM INTO A GREAT NATION. ... Chapter 36 shows that many tribal chiefs came from him... and they acquired great wealth and property.

(BUT HERE IS SOMETHING THAT YOU AND I REALLY NEED TO CONSIDER...) If God so abundantly blesses someone like **Esau**... just

think about the magnitude of His blessings that are in store for those who **serve** Him!

For every generation... the challenge is the same — to see that there is more to life than a meal... or a video game... or baseball... or a party... or a movie... or an indulgence of some kind — to see... as Paul put it... *“It’s What You Can’t See That Matters.”*

Yours and my challenge is to forgo a lethargic spiritual heritage and listless kingdom impact... that comes so easily when we ignore the teaching and preaching of God's Word. ... Yours and my challenge is to listen with all we have. ... Let’s not sell what God has given us through his Word... our church... and our families... for some cheap pleasures. ... If you will not value spiritual things... and give them first place in your life... then the mere physical elements of life will dominate what you are and what you do.

**Number Four** – Let me show you how Genesis 36 is laid out. There are three main sections to it. Verses 1-7 deal with the years that Esau and his family dwelt in Canaan. ... Esau (through his three wives) has a total of five sons... who are all born in Canaan. But then Esau turns away from Canaan... showing (once again) his lack of interest in God’s promises and the promised Land. This is when he moves to Edom... He and his descendants infiltrate and subdue the entire land.

### **Genesis 36:1-8**

From Verse 8 through 30... and then verse 40-43... the chapter deals with Esau’s grand-kids and their descendants. It will show us the chiefs... and warriors... who subdued Edom for Esau’s family. I will just read a portion from it...

## Genesis 36:15-21

Then... in verses 31-39 we get a list of names that are significant Kings and their territories... who were in the land of Edom... which Esau's descendants infiltrated and completely absorbed. God gave Esau so many descendants... that... what they didn't conquer by sword... they took over by out-numbering and inter-marrying with the locals. (I will let you read those names on your own... if you are interested.) But there are several significant insights for us... in all of this. ... They all surround the thought that I have been proclaiming: *"It's What You Can't See That Matters."*

Let's begin by acknowledging - what was happening to Jacob... while his brother (who spurned Spiritual truth) was prospering...? ... Jacob was not prospering (at all) to the same apparent degree. While Esau prospered... Jacob was obliged to work as a servant to his Uncle Laban. Once Jacob left and came back to Canaan... God prospered him... but Jacob was still living as a homeless "Bedouin wanderer"... who eventually had to migrate to Egypt in order to survive a severe drought in Canaan. That drought... undoubtedly... severely diminished Jacobs herds of sheep... cattle... goats... and camels.

While this was happening to Jacob... what was happening to Esau...? Esau was producing generations of tribal chiefs and kings... He was establishing his hold on Edom. He was acquiring great quantities of land that he controlled as his own property. (God wouldn't allow Jacob to own property.) ... And Esau was growing rich in the commerce that belonged to whoever controlled Edom. ... Edom was on the main trading route from Syria to Egypt. A lot of caravans needed to pass through... and they were taxed heavily... if they wanted to pass through on the highway. ... Maybe



we should call Esau the one who was chosen... and Jacob the one who was passed over.

During the time period of all these names in Genesis 36... the drought that devastated Jacob and forced him to take his family to Egypt... (where they were eventually made into slaves for 400 years)... didn't affect Esau. He was able to stay in Edom and become even more prosperous... Esau's descendants multiplied and prospered greatly... while Jacob's descendants were enslaved as pyramid-builders.

So (tell me again) which brother got the better blessing from God...? ... This is where you might answer: *"It's What You Can't See That Matters."*

Esau grew in wealth... But Jacob grew in character! ... And Esau's descendants continued to expand... but where are they today...? ... They intermarried with so many other people groups... that eventually they became indistinguishable as his descendants. In our day... Esau's legacy doesn't remain... except as a dusty historical record. (The last mention of an Edomite in Scripture was the King who tried to kill Jesus as a baby. Wow! What a legacy!) ... But Jacob had the blessing of having the King of Kings as a descendant... and his descendants are still known today. (The Israelites endure as a very distinct people group... from all other ethnicities.)

In Jacob's day... and during the early histories of the Israelites and Edomites... Esau had the appearance of greater success.

Do you ever notice how people who show absolutely no interest in Spiritual truth today... seem to prosper greatly... while YOU... (who may be giving all due diligence to your spiritual responsibilities and disciplines... trying to

maintain a proper relationship with the Lord)... has a life of constant **struggle**... with challenges of every sort! ... Bad people get rewarded... and people like us have to labor and strive to keep our heads above water.

Let Genesis 36 serve as a reminder: *"It's What You Can't See That Matters."* ... Esau had many blessings... but he did not profit by them. They will rise up and condemn him at God's judgment.

Here is another encouragement for us... from today's passage... in terms of our having to labor and strive against obstacles in our life. We don't have to help God out... by engaging in all of our struggles. We can trust Him with our biggest ones.

Do you remember how Jacob (early in his life) was always trying to help God out..? Just one example is that he thought that he had to cheat his brother... to gain his birthright and blessing. Instead... he only gained Esau's hostility.

Jacob eventually learned (after several more struggles) how to receive God's answer to his obstacles... by waiting on God. Canaan belonged to Jacob and his descendants. But when Jacob returned from Haran with his family... Esau and his growing family lived there. This could not continue... if Jacob and his descendants were to inherit the promised land.

When God saw that it was time for Esau to leave Canaan... what we read in the first seven verses of our chapter today... is that GOD CAUSED ESAU TO LEAVE – as Esau's own decision.

How many obstacles do you struggle with... that might be overcome... if you would allow God to overcome them...? I have no doubt that God is already at work in the situation that is giving you the greatest concern right

now. *“It’s What You Can’t See That Matters.”* ... .. Ask God to show you where He is already at work in that matter of great concern to you... and then join Him... in what He is doing.