

Genesis 25:27–34

Valuing Our Birthright by Clinging to Christ

Main idea: The eternal perspective of hoping in Christ to solve the death problem enables us to live for something more than the pleasure of the moment.

²⁷ So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. ²⁸ And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹ Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. ³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.

³¹ But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."

³² And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?"

³³ Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day."

So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Introduction

There are many who despise their birthright in the New Birth. Christ is our birthright. His eternal rest is our birthright. Hearing Him as our apostle on earth, and going with Him to heaven as our High Priest, is a birthright by which He guides us safely until He brings us at last to Himself and His eternal rest. These Lord's Days and these holy assemblies that enter heaven, these are our birthright.

But there are some who forsake the assembling and shrink back (Heb 10), because they lack the ability to see and be sure of the unseen by faith (Heb 11). And when Hebrews 12 is urging us not to let this happen to us, urging us not to fall short of entering heaven in holiness, urging us not to become defiled by counting moments of worldly pleasure to be more important than an eternity of holiness and happiness, Heb 12:16 says, "Don't be like Esau! Who for one morsel of food sold his birthright!"

1. Worldly Nature

a. "I am about to die."

Literally, "I am walking to death." ... "I'm going to die, eventually, anyway." Your coming death testifies to you of your danger. The reason that you are about to die is that you are a sinner. It tells you that you deserve what is in you, and you deserve to have Hell come upon you. Your impending death is not a reason to ignore your eternal soul and live for pleasure; rather, your impending death is a reason to give up living for pleasure and give all your attention to the state of your eternal soul.

b. "What is this birthright to me?"

But even your impending death cannot help you fight worldliness, without the hope of Christ. This was a problem for Abraham back in chapter 15, "Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, seeing I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Death is a problem, because if we die and that's it, then it doesn't actually matter how many will come after us. They all will die too. How does the materialistic worldview end—what if it's true that stuff is really all that there is, and that what we think is a soul is really just an accident in a complex chemical reaction? How does the materialistic worldview end? The way it begins: just a bunch of inanimate stuff sitting there.

Only the hope of Christ, who saves a multitude unto eternal life, solves the death problem. Only

His atoning death and infinitely powerful resurrection solve the death problem.

Otherwise, you will sell eternity for a moment. He ate. He drank. He arose. He went his way. A MOMENT! The birthright consisted of the double portion of the firstborn, the family leadership position—dignity and authority. In this particular family, it meant even more—so much more: the possession of the gates of their enemies and all the nations on earth being blessed through his seed (cf. 22:17–18). And Esau sold all of this for a morsel of stew. What are the moments for which you sell eternity? Cling to Christ, who solves the death problem! And live as one who is clinging to Him!

2. Worldly Nurture

a. “Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game”

Rather than loving his children for the sake of Christ, he loved them for the sake of his flesh. Isaac established a culture in which Esau would treasure that feeling in his stomach and his mouth. Isaac set the tone for a family culture that reinforced Jacob’s perspective of Esau as someone to be manipulated for personal gain (which we will consider in a moment).

Your children aren’t born with a heart of wisdom and don’t instantly get one when they come to faith. The necessity of a father’s and mother’s instruction in Proverbs. It is from you that they will learn to number their days. It is from you that they will learn to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

b. “Now Jacob cooked a stew” ... “Sell me your birthright *today*” ... “Swear to me *today*”

Even believers fail to live as those who cling to Christ. Jacob valued the birthright. But did he pursue it in a way of faith? God had promised to his mother. Perhaps Jacob was not told of the promise (hard to believe, cf. v28). Could he not have come into eternal blessing the way that Ishmael had? If the Christ did not come through him, could he not have hoped in the One who would have come from his brother?

When Christ is everything to us, we don’t mind being nothing. The main point of Christian fellowship is to build one another up into Christ (Eph 4; Heb 10). Not just the roll of a blood brother, but especially the roll of a brother or sister in the blood of Christ. If your blood-siblings do not have the same faith in Christ, this will divide you. But how dreadful for those who have the same faith to fail to stir one another up unto heaven, or even worse to drag one another down into worldliness!

Conclusion

In Hebrews 12:14–16, the Holy Spirit interprets this passage as a warning to pursue peace with all and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. So, how will we respond to this warning? First, by clinging to Him who solves the death problem. The more we cling to Christ, the more “I am about to die” will cause us to cry out, “this birthright is *everything* to me!” And second, by stirring one another up in that mutual faith that we share. By keeping the Lord’s Day together, by going together to heaven in the holy assembly—and in our homes, by establishing a family life in which we love one another for the sake of Christ rather than for the sake of our flesh, even making our meal times into times where we specifically turn one another’s hearts unto Christ. Amen.