

“Esau: Lose Gluttony”

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I do want to encourage you this morning to open your Bible to two places, both in the Old and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Book of Genesis, chapter 25, as we mentioned, we're going to study a character by the name of Esau. In the New Testament, the Book of Hebrews, chapter 12 that gives us a little insight into the life of Esau. As you are turning to those passages of scripture, we have come today in a series this fall on “Be A Loser.” And we are looking at what are the different things in life, chronologically through some very famous characters in the Old Testament, some things that need to be lost in our lives. We need to lose self-reliance; we need to lose bad influences. And today we come to the idea that we need to lose gluttony.

I understand on the forefront and initially what that looks like and what that means, and I would say that ninety-nine point nine percent of the time we associate that directly with intake, or food consumption. But from the very beginning I want to give you a definition for gluttony that is different and beyond just “over eating.” My definition for gluttony as we look at the person of Esau is this: trading tomorrow for today; having an attitude of it doesn't matter what I want as long as I experience what I want today and it is inconsequential what the consequences or the results may be tomorrow. Rather than looking at what God desires for us down the line in the future, we are willing to satisfy the cravings of today and there is no better person to look at than the person of Esau in Genesis 25.

Esau is famously known as one of the grandchildren of Father Abraham: Abraham, Isaac, Esau, then Jacob who is his younger twin brother. As we're going to see in a moment though, Jacob actually receives Esau's birthright because of his gluttonous behavior. We pick up the story in Genesis 25:24.

“<sup>24</sup>And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. <sup>25</sup>And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. <sup>26</sup>And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. <sup>27</sup>And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. <sup>28</sup>And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. <sup>29</sup>And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: <sup>30</sup>And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. <sup>31</sup>And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. <sup>32</sup>And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? <sup>33</sup>And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. <sup>34</sup>Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.”

When we look at this concept of losing gluttony in our lives, whatever gluttony will and does mean for you, there are really two main avenues even though there are three points to the message. I want us to look at the *potential* that Esau had in life and then the *problem* that sidetracked him from reaching his potential in life. And what we are going to see at the end of the message today is Esau's problem was permanent; our problem today may not be the case.

So what was Esau's *potential*? If I could be completely honest with you, it is this attribute in a person's life, potential, that truly breaks my heart. What I mean by that is when we have an area in life that we're not willing to lose, an area we're not willing to turn over to God, something in life we're not willing to believe in or trust God in and we have the potential to be great for God but we're willing to settle for good. When we have the potential to do mighty things for God, but because of our disobedience not such mighty things happen. That is a word that just grips at my heart and if you want to see me really shed some tears over people's lives, it's when I see untapped potential.

And that is exactly what Esau is and was in this story. He had so much ahead of him; he had so much that God desired to give him and do through him. And because he sold his birthright, he forfeited his potential. There were three things he had the potential of. The first one was *finances*. He was the firstborn. He had one brother by the name of Jacob. And in the laws of those days, the way the estate would have been divided at Isaac's death is that the firstborn would receive two parts and the youngest-born would receive one part. Do you realize financially by eating this one meal he gave up half of his inheritance. In just a matter of a few moments, he gave up twice; he would have had two parts but now he only had one part.

He didn't just give up finances, but he also gave up his *future*. To understand his future, we've got to go back a couple of chapters in Genesis 12 when God comes to Abraham, his grandfather, and says, “I will make you a mighty nation. I will give you a child even though you are past childbearing days.” We know that his wife, Sarah, gave birth to Isaac who is the father in this story who eventually gives the blessing to Jacob. Do you realize that Esau was in line to potentially be the grandson of

promise to Abraham, the father of the twelve tribes? When we talk about those famous twelve tribes of Israel, it was Jacob that was renamed Israel, not Esau. So this day when he is gluttonous in his attitude, trading tomorrow for today, he not only gives up a lot of finances, he gives up a future.

But there is a third thing that he gave up potentially, and that was *fruitfulness*. If you were to read throughout the Old Testament, obviously the twelve tribes, one of those tribes was the tribe of Judah, the tribe that would be small in number, but mighty and powerful. When we get to the New Testament, in particular the Book of Matthew, chapter 1, we discover that it would be the tribe of Judah that would come from Jacob that would give birth to the promise that God gave Abraham in Genesis 12: that a Redeemer is coming, a Savior is coming, One who will save us of our sins, who will take the punishment of our sins, One who will go to a cross, arise from the dead and offer us the opportunity for salvation, forgiveness and Heaven and not hell. Do you realize that could have been his lineage? That could have been his heritage. That could have been his life.

He could have been twice as wealthy. He could have given birth to the twelve tribes. He could have been one of the lineages to the Messiah and he traded it for one simple meal. Which means that gluttony isn't just about an overconsumption; it's about looking at what is before us today and being willing to exchange that for the potential that God has for us tomorrow. And the majority of the time today we're going to spend on what was the problem that Esau had. We can call it gluttony; we can call it all types of different things, but essentially, he would rather have one meal today than a life of the promises and the potential of God.

So in looking at Esau's problem, I think the first thing we've got to understand from this passage of scripture is that his problem was rooted in an attitude issue. He had an *attitude* problem. Look in verse 32, "Esau said, Behold, I am at the point of death." What was his attitude problem? He had the *attitude of immediate gratification*. Can I be honest with you, it doesn't matter if you skip the next meal or the next couple of days' meals, do you realize it will not kill you? In fact, you can go multiple meals without eating. In fact, I know what we're going to be eating for lunch today so I ate very lightly yesterday. One of my meals only consisted of some crackers and I was okay. There have been times when I was too busy to eat; there have been times when I fasted. The Bible speaks of fasting where you go times without food. It will not hurt us, and yet Esau says if I don't have this meal then I'm going to die. No, he was not but he had this attitude. And we struggle with this in our culture today; this immediate gratification. He forsook all of his future for one small, quick experience. And that can go beyond the buffet; that can go in a lot of different areas and realms of life but this immediate gratification, not looking at the consequences.

Since we're dealing with gluttony which typically relates to food and the fact that we need to lose this aspect in our lives, I thought today we would look at some of the foods we like to eat and oftentimes we don't realize the long-term ramifications of that food. So what I'm about to share with you is what it takes to actually burn off the caloric intake of some of the things we really enjoy eating. Now the rate at which we are going to burn this off for the illustration purposes is walking at two miles per hour. That is basically a leisurely walk with a little bit of pep to it. Some of you are thinking but when I exercise, I walk three or four miles per hour, or I can run five miles per hour. That may be true for a brief amount of time, but you cannot do it for as long as we're about to talk about. So that being said, we just took a good, brisk walk at two miles per hour and see what you are trading down the road, how much time does it take in the future to burn off the calories of a quick meal.

Let's begin with manna from heaven: Krispy Kreme donuts. One Krispy Kreme is roughly about 200 calories: it would take an hour of walking. So if you eat a dozen Krispy Kremes, do the math; that's 12 hours of walking to burn that off. Our next item, I think you will enjoy for dessert. A piece of original cheesecake from the Cheesecake Factory is 707 calories and roughly about 3 ½ hours to walk it off. I don't know about you, but it takes me about six minutes to eat it! I'm done, it's good and now we've got to go walk for 3 ½ hours. The next one will probably surprise you because sometimes we think we're going to go to a restaurant and we're going to be good. We're going to eat a salad and we're going to put grilled chicken and strawberries on it. Yum, nothing like grazing! Let's go to Longhorn Steakhouse and have a grilled chicken and strawberry salad: 950 calories! Get the steak is all I have to say! Do the math: about 4 ½ hours to walk those calories off and you thought you were being good.

Have you ever gotten tired, and guys, sit in front of a ballgame and, ladies I don't know what you sit in front of, but you thought you just need a good bag of chips. You open the bag of chips and the next thing you know, the bag of chips is empty: 1250 calories and about 5 ½ hours later, you can walk off those chips. It takes about a quarter of a football game to digest that. But you know we live in a society that is really fast-paced and sometimes we've got to go through a drive-through and be really quick, so let's just pretend we're going to go to McDonalds and we're going to get a Big Mac, large fries and a real Coke: 1600 calories and 7 hours later you can burn that off.

Now the reason that we showed these pictures is that I have personally eaten every one of those items multiple times so don't think I'm "anti" those items. But when you enjoy that meal, whether it takes six or seven minutes to enjoy a piece of cheesecake or thirty minutes for the whole meal, what you are doing when you intake calories is that eventually you have to burn those calories off. Sometimes my wife and I will sit down and look at what we really want to eat and we'll say, "Is it worth the pain? Is it worth what it is going to take to get rid of this or to eliminate it from our body?" That's one of the problems of attitude that Esau had: it's okay, I'd rather eat this one meal for thirty minutes or an hour and not worry about what's going to happen tomorrow and look at all that he gave up. He had this attitude of immediate gratification.

But there was another problem that he had and that was an *attitude of arbitration*. Now if you are not familiar with the term arbitration, it's technically a legal term. The best modern example of an arbitrator is Judge Judy. Judge Judy is not a judge. In fact, if you read the details when people come into her courtroom or any of the television courtrooms, what they are doing is signing off on an arbitration that she will render a decision and whatever decision she makes is good. There is a transaction that takes place in that courtroom.

And what Esau did was to actually arbitrate his future. Look at what happens in verse 31. "And Jacob said, Sell me this day your birthright." There was a legal transaction; there was an arbitration that took place even though a judge or official arbitrator wasn't there, but there was "I'll give up and you shall receive." There was an exchange of one thing for another. That's what arbitration is: one party wants one thing and another party wants another, and they come together with a consensus. One wanted the birthright, the other wanted a meal, they arbitrated, they made the transaction and the deal was done.

What is it costing us when we are gluttonous? We can talk about the future; we can talk about what we're giving up tomorrow, what we can or are not able to do for the Lord, but what is it actually physically costing us to have an attitude of gluttony?

There was a movie made some years ago in 2004 entitled *Super Size Me*. I don't know if you are familiar with this, a man by the name of Morgan Spurlock who ironically was engaged to a vegan chef when he did this which makes it even more humorous, is a documentary film producer. In 2004 he made a decision that for thirty days, one month, he would eat nothing but McDonalds. And the rules of his engagement were something like this: he had to eventually eat everything on the menu. He could not just "pick out the healthy things," and at every meal he had to eat a complete meal, not just a snack or one item. He had to consume the entire meal and if whoever took his order asked if he would like that to be supersized then he had to say yes. He literally traded his future. By the way, it took almost six months for him to get back to his pre-experiment days physically.

But he actually made a transaction with his body; he said I'm going to trade my physical health for thirty days. Because I think we all know that one meal at McDonalds or one meal at a fast food restaurant isn't going to kill anybody, but three meals a day for thirty days almost did kill Morgan Spurlock. Over thirty days, he gained 24 ½ pounds. According to the doctor when he went for his three week check-up, because he went in every week, his liver had basically turned to fat. His doctor begged him to please stop doing this. His cholesterol went up 65 points in one month. His risk for cardiac disease doubled in thirty days. Now that is an intense experiment for the purpose of making a documentary, but do you see the arbitration involved: I'm willing to trade the health of my body for this thing.

And that's exactly what Esau said, "I'm willing to trade my finances. I'm willing to trade my future. I'm willing to trade everything so that I can experience this one meal." And finally, his problem wasn't just attitude, it wasn't just arbitration; there was the *action*. In verse 34, "He did eat." It wasn't just a willingness to trade tomorrow for today; it wasn't just a willingness to sacrifice, but he actually did it. That's the problem. So what we have with Esau is a man with untapped potential: all that he could have been for God. But he has this problem of gluttony, not looking at tomorrow because of what is before him today. He literally arbitrates or he trades one meal for all of his future.

So for our final point, I want to look at Hebrews, chapter 12 at the permanence of Esau's decision. And it is in this part of the message that we're going to see that there is a diametrical difference of direction for your life and Esau's life. In Hebrews, chapter 12, beginning verse 16 he is speaking of us being what God would desire us to be, walking the right path of God, taking the correction of God. <sup>16</sup>"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. <sup>17</sup>For you know how that 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."

Esau had eaten the meal; he had consumed the meal and then he came to his senses much like the prodigal son in Luke, chapter 15 and he said, "This is not good. I should not have made this transaction. I should not have done this." So he literally goes to God and begs Him with tears. "God, please take this away. Change this. Fix this." And what does God say? "I'm sorry; it has been done. We cannot reverse the decision that you've made."

Listen: I've got incredible, wonderful news for you as we go through "Be A Loser" this fall: if this is an issue that you're struggling with, if gluttony is a problem, trading tomorrow for today, in specific, over-eating but in other areas of life, please hear me clearly – unlike Esau there is a place of repentance for you. Esau had potential; Esau had a problem like we do, but the difference is Esau's was permanent and yours is not. Let me show you the differences in your life today under the grace of Jesus Christ versus Esau's life in Genesis 25.

The first issue is this: the issue of *repentance*. I know we associate that term oftentimes with sin because when we realize we are a sinner, when we realize we need Jesus to save us then we repent of our sins. But by strict definition, repentance means to change the direction you are going for a new direction.

There could not have been a better example of this than in my home this week. The Meyers' household has been an infirmary this week. We have been poison ivy central this week! The boys have had it; my wife got poison ivy in her eyes. And the worse case was our middle child, George. We were getting nowhere. We were putting all the medicine on him; we were doing everything we knew to do topically. I have been a lifelong sufferer, I know poison ivy. Caladryl and I are good friends; I know how to do this: you've got clear and you've got pink. After three or four days of doing this we were making no progress; if anything, we were regressing. And I remember looking in a little six-year old's eyes and saying, "George, we've got to do something different. We need to go to the doctor." He said, "I don't want a shot." And I'm thinking I wouldn't want one either. But I remember looking in his eyes and saying, "George, do you really want to keep doing this? Do you realize that you will not be able to play recess until we fix this? Do you realize you cannot go outside with the neighbors? Do you realize you will not be able to play soccer this fall until this is solved? We are headed down one path of just kind of mending this; we've got to change directions." And with tears in that little guy's eyes he said, "I'll go see Dr. Beeber." And then he found out he didn't have to have a shot which made it all okay.

But the point is there comes a time that no matter what's happening or what it looks like, whether it's poison ivy or gluttony, you've got to be willing to change directions. Do you see the testimony that Lee gave us? Something had to change. And it didn't happen overnight, but he was willing to say the madness has got to stop, this has got to stop. That's the difference between us and Esau. Esau did not have that privilege of repentance; he did not have the privilege of being able to change his direction. Why? Because according to Hebrews 12 what was done was done. Do you know this very day if gluttony is an issue with you or any other struggle that you need to lose, understand that because you are breathing today and because Jesus Christ is real and alive, you can repent; you can change directions. You can be set free and you can have a new direction in life.

But it's not just an issue of repentance; it's also an issue of what I call *reversibility*. Because of our past behavior, sometimes we are shackled with present struggles, present situations and present illnesses.

As you well know, for several years of our lives, we lived in northeast Mississippi. There was a lady there who was the retired director from the school district's food services program. Her name was Miss Liz. She had not only cooked for generations of students in the local school district, but she was our "cook," she was our "Miss Sylvia" at our church there. So all the meals that we fixed, whether it was a celebration or a Wednesday night meal, Miss Liz put it together.

Shortly after we got to northeast Mississippi this lady who not only enjoyed cooking food but by appearances, you could tell she enjoyed eating food, was diagnosed as being diabetic, type 2 adult onset diabetes. And I'll never forget she came in on a Wednesday night and shared that news with me. And she said, "I'm not going to do this." I asked, "What do you mean you're not going to do this?" She said, "I'm not going to be shackled with this – I'm going to change." Over the course of the next three years, she lost 140 pounds and was diagnosed as no longer being diabetic. Why? Because she changed her life; she said something has got to alter.

And what I want you to know is when you cannot move, like Lee said he couldn't get up the flight of stairs, you can get up the flight of stairs if you can change some things. If you cannot get on the ground with your grandchildren, you can get to the point where you can get on the ground with your grandchildren. If you look up and say, "All these incredible mission trips – I would love to go on a mission trip but I don't have the physical ability to do so." Listen: you change some things and you can go on a mission trip and you can serve the Lord in a mighty way. Why? Because you have potential. We can repent of the sins of our past. We can reverse some of the things we're shackled with in the present.

But this is the key word that I want you to grab. The one thing Esau did not have access to that you do is this: it's called *replacement*. When Esau said I'm willing to eat the meal rather than have the finances, rather than have the future, rather than to be one of the lineage of the Savior then God said, "Fine, if you're willing to do that, I'll just replace you. I'll get Jacob, your younger brother who grabbed you by your heel."

Listen clearly: God made you unique; He made you special; He made you to be you, and nobody can replace you. God created you to do something for Him. He has a plan for you; He has a purpose for you. When you come to know Jesus as your Savior you become His child; His son, His daughter. He didn't just save you for Heaven and not hell, but He also saved you and keeps you alive to glorify Him, to honor Him, to be on mission for Him and to serve Him in a mighty way. And do you understand that God has that plan for your life? And when we come to our lives and say, "Well God, I know, but I'd just rather enjoy what I've got going on right now," then what we are doing is forfeiting our potential and our future.

And I think right now as I look at First Baptist Church of Conyers and those who will see us on the internet and by other means, if there is one thing I can say to you it is I believe with every fiber of my being that God has incredible plans for this church. He has incredible plans for this community. I believe God wants to move in ways that we could not fathom. Ephesians 3:20 says His plans are greater than anything we could even ask for or think about. Do you realize that in order to be used mightily of God we've got to be mightily righteous for God, obedient to God and faithful to God.

So I want to ask you a simple question that is related to Esau: what is it in life today, it may or may not be food, that you are willing to trade, to experience today than to have the riches of God for your future? What have you arbitrated; what have you traded off? Would today be the day that you repent, that you change directions? Would this be the day you say, "God, I want to reverse what I've got going on." Would this be the day you say, "Okay God, you created me for this purpose and I'm ready to live it out." Today isn't about what we've done in the past. Today is about getting in position for what God wants to do in the future. Let's pray.