

SUBJECT: THE BIRTHRIGHT

PASSAGE: GENESIS 25: 19-34

INTRODUCTION - Lacedemonians / Siege / surrender / sorrow/ Esau

“There was once an army, which had sustained a long siege, but finally surrendered to the enemy for want of water. After they had drunk out of the river, they cried, “O comrades, for what a little pleasure have we gained but at the loss of an incomparable good! We, miserable men, have quenched our thirst, returned to our senses, and mourned over our lost liberty.”

Esau having satisfied his appetite, did not consider that he had sacrificed a blessing far more valuable than a hundred lives, to purchase a meal which would be ended in half an hour.”

Transition: Esau - Bad Behavior / Birthright despised / Our focus now

Esau would do some bad things in his life.

- He would cause great pain to his parents by marrying two Hittite women.
- And here in Genesis 25, Esau displays his depraved nature by selling his birthright for a measly bowl of soup and a piece of bread to his brother Jacob! He even takes an oath before God to seal the transaction.
- How little Esau valued his birthright! It meant nothing to him. Today I would like to focus our attention on the birthright and how we must desire after it!

I. DEFINING THE BIRTHRIGHT

What was the birthright?

A.W. Pink, in his commentary in Genesis writes, “The birthright was a most cherished possession in those days. It consisted of the excellency of dignity and power, usually a double portion. In connection with the family of Abraham there was a peculiar blessing attached to the birthright: it was spiritual as well as temporal in its nature. The birthright was a spiritual heritage. It gave the right of being the priest of the family. It carried the privilege of being the depository and communicator of the Divine Secrets. It constituted a link in the line of descent by which the Messiah was to be born into the world.”.

A) Birthright / physical blessings / only part of it

The birthright was a cherished possession because of the physical blessings associated with it.

Deuteronomy 21:15-17 (King James Version)

If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated:

Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn:

But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.

- Deut. 21:15-17 speaks of a “double portion” to be given to the firstborn. This consisted of material blessings such as land, animals, food and other valuable goods.
- The blessing which Isaac bestowed on Jacob included the “fatness of the land,” and “plenty of corn and wine.”
- Today, this would be equivalent to receiving an inheritance. An inheritance could include a house, property, a large sum of money. The temporal blessings were an important part of the birthright. But it wasn’t the only thing.

B) Birthright / Cherished- Spiritual Blessing / Priest

- The birthright was a cherished possession because of the spiritual blessings. It gave the right of being the priest in the family.

John Calvin observes, “It is to be remembered that the birthright included not merely earthly advantages, but those also which were spiritual. Till the tribe of Levi was accepted by God, in lieu of all the first-born of Israel, the eldest son was the priest of the family as well as its natural head.”

1. Duties as Priest / Sacrifice / Live holy / Intercessor

As priest of the home, the firstborn responsibilities were to lead in sacrifice.

Atonement was to be made for sin.

- It was the firstborn who was required to teach his family that the way of forgiveness was thru the blood. There was a covering for sin.
- Another function of the priest was consecration. It was expected of the son who had the birthright to live an holy and godly life before God and his family. He was called to live a life that exemplified a close walk with the Lord.
- And thirdly, as priest, the firstborn was expected to make intercession for his family. Isaac reflects this attribute as priest in Genesis 25:21

Genesis 25:21

And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

2. Spiritual Heritage

In addition to being the priest in the family, the birthright enabled the firstborn to be the beneficiary of a spiritual heritage. The spiritual blessings which were realized by his descendents were passed down to him, and the blessings he realized were handed down to his successors.

3. Example - Naboth / Cherished physical heritage

A prime example of a man that cherished the heritage passed down to him was the man Naboth and his vineyard. The story is found in I Kings 21. Naboth

owned a beautiful vineyard. King Ahab saw it and wanted it. He offered a handsome price to buy it from Naboth. But verse 3 states, “And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.”

Ahab said name your price. But Naboth’s birthright was not for sale. It was his spiritual heritage that would be passed down to his children and their children.

4. Naboth - application / comparison to Esau / death

Think about the difference between how Esau despised his birthright and threw it aside for a bowl of soup and how Naboth cherished the heritage passed down to him, and eventually died unwilling to relinquish what he cherished.

- Now that we have defined what the birthright is let us look at.....

II. DESPISING THE BIRTHRIGHT

After learning about the birthright, it may be hard to imagine that a man would not cherish these blessings, both physical and spiritual - but as we know Esau did not.

Why was the birthright despised by Esau?

-Because he was a profane person

Hebrews 12:16 “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”

-The word profane means common, worldly.

-The opposite of the word profane is holy which means separate

- Profane/Holy regarding the Sabbath

The Lord's Day is to be a holy day. Not a common day. This is what caused holy indignation in the Lord Jesus Christ when he threw over the money changers tables in the temple. They were making common the House of God. Sadly the profaning and desecration of the Lord's Day is all too common.

- Esau despised both the temporal and spiritual blessings associated with the birthright for a bowl of soup but it is the spiritual part according to Calvin which Esau treated with peculiar contempt, and for which the Apostle Paul styles him a "profane person."

Results - Esau's heritage to descendants

This spiritual contempt and enmity of Esau toward the things of God was passed down to his descendents the Edomites, a nation which was a constant thorn in the side of Israel. Then from the Edomites came the Herodians, who conspired to kill the Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 3:6.

Mark 3:6

And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

This is why Esau despised his birthright because he was a profane person and this was passed down to his children. What a legacy!

III. Desiring the Birthright

A) First we see that Jacob wanted the birthright.

How is this seen?

- It's very interesting that when he was a baby, he came out holding the heel of Esau.
- This was the topic of conversation between Jacob and Esau in our text. (Probably not the first time this was discussed)
- His determination in obtaining the birthright
 1. He bought it from Esau
 2. He deceived his father

The Birthright was traditionally given to the first born.

- This birthright was promised to Jacob by God
- Jacob was not trusting God to fulfill His promise.

We see that Jacob went about obtaining the birthright in his own strength and wisdom.

- Buying it from Esau and later, under the direction of his mother Rebecca, he pretended to be Esau, deceived Isaac, and stole the blessing.

What were the results of Jacob's actions?

- What if Jacob would have trusted the Lord to bestow the birthright and blessings upon him? God had said, "The elder shall serve the younger."
- Instead of seeing the promise of God fulfilled with a joyful outcome, Jacob had to leave his home becoming a fugitive from his brother; his mother Rebecca would never see Jacob again.

Jacob was not the only man in the Bible to lack faith in God's Promises

- What if **Abraham's** faith would have been unwavering toward God's promise when He said that Sarah will conceive and bear you a son?
- What if he had waited instead of trying to fulfill the promise through his own actions
- Instead Hagar's son Ishmael, became father of the Arabs. How different world history might be today.
- Look at **David**. Here was a man who believed God. The Lord said that David would be king. David had opportunity to kill King Saul. But he didn't. He let God be true to His Word, and David became King.

B) Why did Jacob want the birthright?

We can see why Jacob desired the birthright in Romans 9:13.

Romans 9:13

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

- God loved Jacob.
- His Grace is irresistible

The name Jacob actually means “swindler.” Jacob didn’t deserve the birthright. It was his because of God’s irresistible grace. God loved Jacob and His irresistible grace is seen in Jacob’s desire to obtain the birthright.

IV. Do you have a birthright?

1 Peter 1:3-4 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an **inheritance incorruptible**, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

If you are a child of God - you have an inheritance waiting for you in heaven.

This Inheritance, although in the future, we have blessings now.

- The spiritual blessings.
- The Word of God.
- Worship.
- Prayer.

This Inheritance comes with responsibilities

- Duties of husbands and fathers to lead as priests in the home.

Are you teaching your children about the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of sins?

- Are you consecrated before God and your family?
- Are you interceding for your family on a daily basis.

Jacob and Esau both left spiritual heritages.

- Jacob's heritage is seen in the Children of Israel and ultimately it was through his seed that Christ came to bring salvation.
- Esau's heritage was seen in those that opposed and hated the Lord and ultimately, his seed is no more on this earth but the spirit of enmity against the Lord and his people remains.

Obadiah 1:18

And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of **Esau** for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of **Esau**; for the LORD hath spoken it.

What is the Spiritual Heritage that will follow you?

- Do you seek after the things of God?
- Is there an “Incorruptible Inheritance” waiting for you?
- Or are you like Esau, despising the birthright and the blessings of God until it was too late.

Hebrews 12:17

For ye 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.