

# What You Despise Reveals Who You Are

Grace Fellowship | Cory Hughes | Genesis 25:27-34

Look, there is one prayer that I am praying this morning, and I hope You are too in Your heart, is that our soul would be satisfied in Christ alone. This is why we gather: to not lose dissatisfaction. If You have Your Bibles, You can turn them to Genesis 25. We're going to finish chapter 25 this morning with verses 27 through 34.

Last week, Nick gave an excellent message, primarily dealing with the doctrine of election, which He titled, *Wanted, Not Worthy*. And that title really gets at why the doctrine of election is not scary; it's not meant to be scary, not meant to be intimidating, not meant to be illogical, but rather why it's beautiful. The doctrine of election does not snuff out hope for salvation, but rather it gives hope to hopeless sinners. Listen to Paul reflect on this doctrine specifically concerning our chapter, Genesis 25. Listen to what he says in Romans 9:16. He says, God's election depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.

Now, when we hear that verse, it should not cause us to be frightened and think, "Oh, no, salvation is in God's hands." Rather, that verse should cause us to excel and almost collapse on the floor thinking, "Oh, thank God, there's a chance for me because I am hopeless in myself." If my salvation depends on what I can do, I have no hope. But praise be to God, it doesn't depend on me. It depends on Him.

But I want You to ask Yourself a question this morning. Just really self-reflective as the whole message is going to be. Do You believe God is merciful? You see, sin has a way of disorienting our thoughts about God. But I want You to hear this morning God's own self-revelation in Exodus 34:6. The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. That's who our God is.

I believe the reason that many people struggle with the clear biblical teaching of the doctrine of election is because they don't really grasp verses like this one. Rather, they think too highly of themselves and too low of God. And this, in fact, as we all have been guilty of, displays our depravity and our need for a Savior. To think that Your salvation would be better off in the hands of anyone else, including Your own, rather than God's, seems to reveal a lack of serious consideration about what the Bible has to say, not just about God, but about humanity.

Maybe You heard last week's message and You're hearing what I'm saying this morning, and You're still struggling with this doctrine. And I just want to tell You, that is a-okay. That's okay. This doctrine is not like trigonometry. So You don't need to be sitting there going, "I guess I'm not heady enough. I guess I'm not smart enough." This doctrine is a doctrine of faith. It's about we believe these things, not understand them.

I heard Nick and Kelly explaining it this way this week. They said the scriptures clearly show us that God sovereignly controls all things. That's here. You with me? But the scriptures also show us that humanity makes real choices that have real consequences. How are both of these things to be true? I don't know, but I believe it. I believe it. If I lean too much this way, I become hopeless because nothing I do matters. And if I lean too much this way, I become hopeless because everything depends on me. May we not lean one way or the other, but rather may we say things like this:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He chose us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ... according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace."

In Jesus, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. When we heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and we believed in Him, we were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it. Amen.

That's just what the Bible tells us. I didn't make that up. But this is the truth intention that God's Word consistently gives us as creatures trying to understand what our Creator is like. He's magnificent. Now the apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians that this glorious message can't just remain here. Like this glorious message must transform our hearts. Knowing about this news, as many of You already do sitting here, is not enough. If it weren't, we would stop gathering. But why do we keep gathering week after week? Because we must believe this and continue believing this until it transforms our entire lives—being, the way we think, the way we understand, the way we love, the way we desire, our affections, everything must become transformed so that we value this message, so that we treasure it, so that we hold it dear, we guard it, and we build our lives upon it.

This message is everything. Otherwise, if we don't do this, we can end up like Esau, which is who we're going to be looking at in today's passage. Today's verses are going to give us some details about Esau's life. And I believe these details are meant to be a warning sign to us. And if that warning sign had a message on it to us this morning, it would say something like this: What You despise reveals who You are.

The prophecy from last week's passage in verse 23, along with the commentary that we have in Romans 9, lets us know that God has chosen Jacob and passed over Esau. So in this week's text, we are shown why Esau is not the elect. And don't miss what I just said. This week's text shows us why Esau is not the elect.

The Text: Genesis 25:27–34

*When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game. But Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, "let me eat some of that red stew for I am exhausted." Therefore, his name was called Edom. Jacob said, "sell me your birthright now." Esau said, "I am about to die. Of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew and he ate and drank and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.*

Father, we ask that Your Word would change us. Father, I pray that any words I speak today would be complementary to what You have said. Lord, give us understanding from this message today that we might be more like Jesus, more satisfied in Jesus, more worshipful of You, our God, Father, Son, and Spirit. We pray, amen.

What You despise reveals who You are. Now, the first thing we need to do in today's sermon is to define the word *despise*. What does it mean that Esau despised his birthright? For most of us, the word *despise* carries a lot of weight. Like if I were to ask You, "what do You despise?" You'd probably hesitate and wonder if there's anything You would say You despise, other than outright wickedness, things we could point to that are grossly immoral. But let me explain what the scriptures mean by that word. To despise something in the scriptures means simply that *this* thing has greater value than *that* thing. So if this thing has greater value than that thing, You despise that thing. You with me?

That's the biblical meaning. Esau, in our text, valued a bowl of stew more than his birthright. And the scriptures say he despised his birthright. Now, important note here. I didn't say that despising means to prefer something else more. We all have morally neutral preferences that are benign. But Esau's trade here is his birthright for a bowl of stew. He valued immediate temporal satisfaction for his belly while despising the promises of God.

To despise means we value something else more. Let me make this even clearer for You. In the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:24, Jesus says no one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or he'll be devoted to the one and—guess which word Jesus picks to use here?—*despise* the other. It's very black and white.

Here's an important warning for You: Your flesh is always going to try and say, "this is just Your preference. You're not despising holiness. Calm down." So this is why we should not be too quick to write off even our preferences. The scriptures tell us to examine ourselves. And guess what? Preferences don't get a check. They don't get a pass. They should be checked as well. Because what You despise reveals who You are.

Now, we could make the title positive by saying *what You value reveals who You are*, but our passage is not primarily about what Esau valued. It's rather about what he despised. Esau's life is meant to give us a glimpse into the character of a person who is not part of God's elect. Remember, Esau is not like Ishmael. He was legitimately the firstborn of

Isaac. And so by every human expectation, the covenant mantle that Abraham passed to Isaac should have been passed to Esau. But Esau despises his birthright and loses much more—much, much more than a physical inheritance.

Therefore, I would like for us to see three things this morning that Esau despised in order that we would not end up like him. So that we would not end up like him. But Corey, we're the elect. He was not elect. How can we end up like him? Is anybody's brain doing that? If it is, just hit the override button. Because it doesn't work like that. In light of the doctrine of election and stories like the one we're looking at this morning, we are told things like we see in 2 Peter 1:10: *Be all the more diligent to confirm Your calling and election.* Don't just think, "well, I believe." No. Be diligent in confirming these things.

Stories like this are meant to sober us. So here's three things I believe Esau despised in this story:

1. He despised a quiet life dwelling in tents.
2. He despised discipline.
3. He despised his birthright.

Now I want You to hold Your place in Genesis 25 and I want You to turn over to Hebrews 12. Two weeks ago, I preached a message on a text that commentators wondered why anyone would give full exposition to such a text. And this week, I get to preach a text that a New Testament writer led by the Holy Spirit penned a whole chapter in light of.

I don't want You to hear this sermon, which is going to be very self-reflective, without Jesus at the forefront of Your thoughts. My prayer is that this sermon would cause us to delight in our Savior more. That we would value Him, treasure Him, and not despise Him even in our pursuit of holiness. You understand we're capable of that, right? Like we're capable on a Sunday morning of hearing things and going, "I need to get holy" and just bypass the cross altogether. And it's not that we don't make any headway in our holiness or our sanctification. We actually do worse when we don't go to the cross first.

So look at Hebrews 12:1–2. Therefore, it says, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus. I just got a pause. I'm coaching Little League Baseball right now. One of the things is like, I'm telling these six-year-olds and seven-year-olds all the time, is listen and look to Your coach. Look at Your coach. That's what he's saying. If You're going to run to holiness, You've got to keep Your eyes on Jesus. Don't look down at Your feet. Don't look around where You're at. Don't look around what's going on. Look to Jesus. That's what he's saying here. The founder and perfecter of our faith. He'll get it done. Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. Oh, look at this. Despising the shame. And is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Esau despised living a quiet life in tents. He despised discipline. He despised his birthright. Jesus did not despise any of these things. Jesus did not seek equality with God as something to be grasped, but He emptied Himself, becoming like a servant and being found in human form. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death even on a cross. Therefore our God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name that is above every name, so that in the Name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue should confess on heaven and in earth that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Church, Jesus is not merely our example. Jesus is our hope. Jesus is our Savior. And so while I hope this message convicts You as much as it has me this week—because I can just tell You, if one way frames up how I feel this week, it's exhausted—I pray that in that, we would look to Jesus. Hope is found nowhere else.

## 1. Esau Despised a Quiet Life Dwelling in Tents

Flip now back to Genesis 25, verses 27 and 28. This is where we're going to find our first point. It says when the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field. Jacob was a quiet man dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Think of Esau, in our context, as the business entrepreneur type who's constantly on the go and perhaps the envy of all those who know him. Jacob, on the other hand, is a quiet man who likes to be at home. Think of him as very ordinary. Now, let me caution You to not understand nor impose any inherent morality in the two boys' personalities. But here's what I'm confident in: God isn't interested in making skillful hunters become tent dwellers. He isn't trying to make business entrepreneurs ordinary stay-at-home people. God desires to sanctify and make both skillful hunters and tent dwellers holy. As He is holy.

One of the errors of fundamentalism that leads to legalism is the wrong presumption that because certain vocations or personality types seem to be more in line with godliness, they are superior. Don't make this mistake. Discussions concerning vocation choice and personality require a very nuanced conversation. But what we must understand from the Scriptures is that one of the ways God sanctifies us is by pushing back against our natural proclivities. When Jesus calls us to follow Him, the call entails a denial of what? Yourself.

Sanctification entails knowing ourselves, knowing the weak spots of our personalities. While virtue is not to be found in one single personality, here's what we do: we often despise personalities different from our own. I love to coach, but I love to coach *my* way. Not *Your* way. I'm a pretty awful assistant. And that's a problem. Because what starts to happen is I start to add value to what I do and no value to what You do.

I believe Esau despised a quite ordinary life like his brother lived, which made him susceptible to things like we see in our text: exhaustion. When You're running around

taking responsibility for everything, it's easy to despise those who are taking responsibility for less. This is where the story of Martha and Mary is kind of a real parallel for us. Martha was up serving everyone in the house, but it was Mary who ignored the busyness and sat at the feet of Jesus. Who chose the good thing? Mary.

In a similar way, we would be in error to think that Jacob is morally upright in this story. While he might be shrewd as a serpent, he is definitely not innocent as a dove. Church, here's the word to us: In our body, we have athletes and we have artists, builders and thinkers, leaders and listeners. God has given us a variety here, not to ask who's the greatest in the kingdom, but to learn from one another and value our differences, not despise them. Despising our differences will lead to making critical errors like the one we see in our passage. Esau despised an ordinary life, dwelling in tents. And I believe this is definitely one of the things that led to his exhaustion, which leads to our second point.

## 2. Esau Despised Discipline

Look at verse 29. Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, "let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted." Therefore, his name was called Edom.

I do want You to see my work here. I don't want You to think I'm pulling these ideas out of thin air. So go back over to Hebrews 12. We're dealing with commentary from the Holy Spirit on this passage. Hebrews 12:3 says: *Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself so that You may not grow weary or faint hearted. Consider Jesus so that You may not become exhausted.*

Now look at verse 4 that weds up this idea of exhaustion with discipline. The same sun that hardens the clay melts ice. The same boiling water that makes an egg hard softens a potato. Logically speaking, a single circumstance can have multiple outcomes on various individuals. What shapes one person's life for good could lead to the utter ruin of someone else. What's the difference? I would contend the difference is in what we despise, or positively speaking, what we value.

Esau leaned too much into his natural proclivities and thus despised living an ordinary life in tents. This then led him to despise the discipline of the Lord in specific areas that would govern his behavior. When You don't value what You see in other people, You will despise it and therefore not care to have it disciplined in You. And when that doesn't get disciplined in You, this will lead toward grave errors that the Lord wants to keep You from. God is desiring that we become in His image. Not in "super You." God doesn't want "super You." He wants Jesus in You.

This is why the church is absolutely essential for Christian growth. In the church, we get the whole Christ, not an aberration of His person that looks more like just one of us. When Paul calls us to walk with wisdom in Ephesians 5, he says that we should submit to one another.

Why? Because we can see one another's flaws better than we can see our own. It's true. The Scriptures clearly state that You can have a log in Your eye and see a speck in Your brother's. We're very good at this. So we need to use this. That's what the Scriptures call us to do.

But when You don't value their personality or how they do things already, it takes discipline. Look back at Genesis 25:31. So seeing now that Esau is exhausted, Jacob says, "sell me Your birthright. Do it now." Esau said, "I am about to die. Of what use is a birthright to me?" That question Esau asked is so indicting. When we begin valuing things based merely off their use to us, without any regard for God's purposes or the benefit of others, we have become extremely narrow in our thinking. You are not growing more God-like; You are growing self-centered. "What use is this to me?"

Esau was not ignorant of the promises of God that were on his family. It wasn't that he didn't know about them. It was just that he didn't value them. He didn't care. He despised them. And this is where despising discipline takes us. When You despise discipline, You are despising one of God's most important means to make You holy. God uses discipline to transform us away from self-centeredness and into people who love Him, who love others, who care about His purposes.

Turn Your Bibles back over to Hebrews 12:7: *It is for discipline that You have to endure. God is treating You as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If You are left without discipline in which all have participated, then You are illegitimate children and not sons.* Sounds like an odd comparison to make, doesn't it? Well, it's only an odd comparison if You're not reading it in light of Genesis, where we have Ishmael, the illegitimate son, but now we have Esau who is legitimate in terms of birthright but who is illegitimate in a spiritual sense. This is the primary point of the Old Testament: it's giving us physical realities that point towards spiritual realities—much greater spiritual realities—to show us what He is doing with a spiritual, eternal people.

Look at verse 9. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? He disciplines us for our good that we may share His holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. But later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Esau despised this discipline. Despising various image-bearers who reveal God differently than You do will lead You to a very narrow mind that also despises God's discipline of Your own character. And when You despise the discipline of Your character, You will end up despising the things in Your life that are most important.

### 3. Esau Despised His Birthright

This is Your third and final point. Esau despised his birthright. As we round this last corner:

1. Have an open mind. When You see people doing things in the body that You don't understand, do not let Your first thought be something like, "Are You serious? What are we doing?" Stop. Acknowledge it. Repent of that sin in Your heart that despises how others do things. Say, "Lord, I'm arrogant. Please change my heart that I may not continue in this tendency to be so presumptuous like Esau."
2. Discipline Yourself for godliness. Find someone who is vastly different from You and do life with them. Don't find an echo-chamber friend. Find the kind of friend that says, "well, they might have a good reason for doing that." We need those relationships to edge out the things in our personality that need to be edged out for godliness.

Remember, when we do this, we do this to make every effort to confirm our calling and election. Esau was a man who did not do this. Look at verse 33. Upon seeing that Esau did not care about his birthright, Jacob says, "swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

This is what it looks like, church, to throw away everything. This is why the New Testament authors are crystal clear that Esau is a negative example for us to avoid. What I want to point Your attention to is the spiritual reality that You, if You are not careful, will sell Your salvation for an impulse. You'll sell Your salvation for less.

Did You know that in Christ we all have a birthright? If You have believed in Christ and You have been born again, You have a spiritual birthright. You're a co-heir with Christ. You're going to reign with Him in the new heavens and new earth. You're going to inherit all that God has. He speaks things into existence with His voice. This is Your inheritance. Do not let the cares and concerns of this world keep You from that. Don't get choked out by the circumstances You're dealing with.

I'm telling You, getting up here to preach this morning, I am so in line with Esau. And it's not good to say that. I've watched myself over and over again this week when things have turned wrong and things have turned wrong, I've turned wrong. And I'm going, "why do I keep doing this?" It's because I need to believe what God is showing me here. I need to discipline myself. I need the discipline of God on my life. I need to look to Jesus. I need to treasure Christ more than I currently do.

The birthright is ours if we endure. Turn back to Hebrews 12:12. This is where we're going to end:

"Therefore... Lift Your drooping hands and strengthen Your weak knees and make straight paths for Your feet so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble... and that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold

his birthright for a single meal. For You know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. For he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears."

Church, today is the day of repentance. And if You're hearing this, then the Lord is offering You repentance. Repent. Do not wait. Waiting is the most dangerous game You can play with God. When he decided he would repent, he couldn't.

Father, we need You. We need Your Holy Spirit, not just to convict us, but to move us, to will us toward holiness. Father, I pray for my brothers and sisters and myself that upon hearing this message, we would not look within, but we would look to Your cross. Father, I pray that we would see Jesus as better, more valuable, more worthy, more glorious than anything else in this world. I pray this in Jesus' Name. Amen.