

Forgotten Lives

Esau

Genesis 25-33

June 28, 2026 am

HDBC

Continuing our series ***Forgotten Lives***. Looking at people who are easily overlooked, as they are overshadowed by more well-known people.

Onesiphorus – Encourager to the apostle Paul.

Cain – Rejected the grace of God and killed his brother.

Lydia – Businesswoman who met Jesus and found peace/purpose.

Men of Issachar – Men of discernment and direction.

This morning we are going back to the villain category as we consider the sad and tragic story of Esau. He was a troubled man who made a serious and tragic mistake from which he never recovered. Survey his life in Genesis then consider what the New Testament says about him.

1. His Unique Beginning (Gen. 25:21-26)

The text reveals three interesting things about the pregnancy and birth.

1) It was difficult

His mother was delighted to be pregnant, after going through a period of barrenness. But she recognized that something was going on in her womb. The text says the *children struggled in her womb*. In other words there was a lot of activity. Even though she had never been pregnant before, she instinctively knew that something was unusual. So, she asked the Lord for an answer. And He provided it.

2) It was prophetic

The Lord's answer must have been surprising, exciting and a bit confusing. The Lord reveal three things in the form of a prophecy.

You will have twin boys. They will be the fathers of two nations.

The older would serve the younger.

Both history and the Bible have confirmed the truth of those three statements. Jacob, the younger, would be the head of the people whom God would call to be His own special nation. It would be through Jacob that the Messiah would come and through Jacob's people that the Word of God would be revealed. Through Jacob, God would bless the world.

Beyond that, God would use those two men and their nations as an illustration of His sovereign and providential grace. **The New Testament language is strong and mysterious, reflecting God's rejection of Esau and acceptance of Jacob.**

Rebekah must have pondered these thoughts with great curiosity. I wonder if that knowledge influenced her to be drawn more to the younger, knowing that he was destined to be greater than the older.

3) It was competitive

Even before they were born these two boys were competing with one another. The ***struggled*** in their mother's womb. Esau was born first, but when Jacob emerged he was holding Esau's heel. **We might think of this as a sweet sign of the love between these two boys. The story of their life will tell a different story!**

2. His Shortsighted Decision (Gen. 25:27-34)

This was the critical decision that confirmed the negative course of Esau's life and impacted his relationship with Jacob for decades. The competition between these two boys extended beyond their childhoods and stayed with them the rest of their lives. They were so very different.

Esau was a man of the field. Loved the hunt and fish. Even his body hair screamed that he was a ***macho man***. His daddy favored him. **Jacob was indoor type.** Loved to cook. Doted on by his mama. No mention of body hair. Smooth skin. Note three things about this critical event between these men. **(I'm going to have a little fun with alliteration)**

1) The temptation

Two things happened to create this temptation. Esau had been in the field and was hungry. Text says he was **famished**. Second, Jacob had cooked a savory stew. The two primary things needed for a serious temptation were present, **desire and availability**. When the hungry in Esau met the smell of the stew, the temptation was set.

2) The negotiation

Esau began the negotiation with a request for a taste. I'm sure he wanted more than a taste, but it was a starting point. He even made the case, **for I am famished**.

Jacob countered with a request to purchase the birthright which belonged to Esau. They each had something the other wanted. But don't miss an important point. The two things were not of equal value. One was infinitely more important than the other. However, Jacob could probably see in his brother's eyes that he had him in a vulnerable place.

Esau's response was so short-sighted. He mused that if he died the birthright would be worthless. Better to lose the birthright and live than die and lose it anyone. What a childish and silly thing to think and say. **He was not about to die!**

3) The capitulation (33)

The deal was made. Jacob demanded a firm commitment from Esau. Once he secured it, he released the soup and bread. Esau was satisfied for a moment, but gave up something of infinitely more value. The text says he **despised his birthright**.

3. His Stolen blessing (27:1-46)

This is one of the saddest episodes in Esau's life. It was sad that he gave up his birthright, but he did that himself. It was a self-induced problem. Not so with the blessing.

The birthright brought with it an additional inheritance but also additional responsibility. He was to be the patriarch when dad died. He gave that up. It was an indication that he did not value his responsibility.

But when it came to the blessing, he desperately desired that. Yet, it was taken from him. We can't read all 46 verses, so let me summarize the account.

1) Isaac prepares to bless Esau (1-4)

Instructed him to do his thing . . . hunt, kill and cook for dad.

The plan was for Isaac to enjoy the meal prepared for his firstborn, then pronounce the blessing over him.

2) Rebekah subverts the plans of her husband (5-17)

She instructed Jacob to deceive his father in order to receive the blessing in place of his older brother.

Covering his smooth skin with animal fur and dress him in Esau clothing. Presented his dad with a savoring meal, claiming it was fresh meat that he killed. The meal would be delicious; the clothing would cause him to smell like Esau and the animal fur on his arms would make him feel like Esau.

It was wrong. It was a deceptive, wicked plan.

It was rebellious. Rebellion against authority of her husband.

It was hurtful. This was a mom working against her own son.

It was unnecessary. God had already promised to bless Jacob.

3) Esau loses the blessing (18-39)

Simply put, the plan worked as Rebekah had hoped. Isaac was suspicious, particularly when he heard the voice of Jacob. He knew his sons. He should have been more sensitive and savvy. He blessed Jacob, thinking it was Esau.

Almost as soon as Jacob left the presence of his father, Esau arrived with his own savory meal, anticipating the blessing of his father. Both were shocked. Esau did not give up easy. He begged his father to bless him, to no avail. Esau was furious and plotted revenge. **Read verse 41.**

This was a broken, dysfunctional family.

Favoritism by both parents. Wife who was not submissive. Boys who were competitive and took advantage of each other. Father who waited too long to bless his firstborn, and thus was easily fooled.

There is something more. The ultimate destiny of the two boys had been predetermined by God. Yet the parties involved participated in sinful acts to achieve that destiny. Jacob would be the one blessed. Jacob would be elevated over his older brother. **All were guilty.**

Isaac ignored the prophetic word, planning instead to bless Esau. Rebekah deceived her husband and led her son in the deception. Jacob participated in the plan, lying to his father. Esau showed his weakness in giving up his birthright so cheaply.

4. His Reconciliation with Jacob(Gen. 33:1-9)

Years go by. Both brothers prosper and build their own families. Jacob finally returns home but expects retribution from his brother. Instead he finds open arms and the blessing of his brother.

If the story of Esau ended there, we would say all was well. He forgave his brother. God had worked. Maybe Esau wasn't such a bad guy. But the New Testament gives us a more accurate picture. Let's close by looking at what it says about Esau.

5. The New Testament Assessment (Heb. 12:15-17)

We get the definitive word from the book of Hebrews. Five things revealed in that passage about Esau.

- 1) **He came short of the grace of God. Unsaved.**
He remained unsaved, unredeemed.
- 2) **He was filled with bitterness.**
Unresolved anger, resulting in bitterness which impacted others.
- 3) **He was immoral and godless.**
He let sin rule his life. We all come into the is world in that same condition. We are immoral & godless, and thus, in need of salvation,
- 4) **He traded a future promise for a temporary pleasure.**
The birthright was his, but he would have to wait for it. He gave it away for immediate gratification which could be enjoyed for a moment but would fade quickly.
- 5) **He lost his inheritance with God because he did not repent.**
Don't underestimate the importance of repentance. Jesus said, ***unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.***

Takeaways:

From Esau: For everyone.

Accept the plan of God, even if it feels unfair.

Don't forfeit future opportunities for immediate gratification.

Respond to life disappointments with grace and trust.

From Isaac and Rebekah: For parents.

Don't show favoritism to your children.

Trust the plan of God for your children, and share it with them.

Work with each other, not against each other.

Jacob: For everyone.

Trust God to accomplish His plan in you. Be patient. Don't press.

Never take advantage of a weaker person for your own benefit.

Resist the impulse to win at all costs.