

## A Most Expensive Meal – *Genesis 25:27-34*

**Introduction** – “*So the boys grew*”, Esau and Jacob. And for the first fifteen years they would have sat with Abraham and heard the stories of the covenant God had made. Isaac was the promised seed of that covenant, and the twins would have been growing into manhood knowing something of the prophecy that “*the older would serve the younger.*” Imagine the tension. Isaac was prepared by God, having been the second born himself, to support Jacob, but Isaac backed the son that God was not backing.

Behind this is the sin of the belly-god (Phil 3:19), the idol we make of our passions, being mastered by our appetites rather than mastering our appetites. We think our desires are so strong, but CS Lewis would say that “*the Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are halfhearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.*” And we live in a culture that hates delaying gratification, mastered by their appetites. All around us we see the results of selling one’s birthright for a pot of stew, a most expensive meal.

**Overview with Commentary** – Laying out the text and taking note:

**Hunter-v-Mild Men** (v27) – Both words need thoughtful exegesis. A contrast is being made but not what is usually put forth. There was another hunter earlier in Genesis and his name was Nimrod and he led the people who built the tower of Babel (Gen 10:8-10). Jacob was a “*tam*” man. Every other place that word is used (or its similar “*tamim*”) it is translated “perfect, mature, blameless” (i.e. of Noah, Job, the Shulamite, and here of Jacob).

**“Dwelling in Tents”** – This is not saying Jacob preferred hanging out at home. In contrast to Esau the Nimrod-type hunter, wild and out in the fields, Jacob was a herdsman, shepherd, moving flocks and therefore moving around himself (Gen 4:20) as had his father and grandfather (Heb 11:9).

**Who Loves Who?** (v28) – Remember our discussion about the phrase “*Jacob I loved but Esau I hated?*” This was about who the blessing would be placed on (and therefore who should receive the birthright and blessing from Isaac). While this verse may refer to the parents “favoring” one son over another, the key thing to note is that Rebekah loved the one God loved. And notice why Isaac loved Esau – for the wild game (belly-god).

**Weary, weary, for red stuff** (vv29-30) – Esau came in from the field weary, exhausted. He comes to Jacob and asks for “*the red stuff, the red stuff.*” This must have been overheard for he gets the nickname “*Edom*” and so characterizes him that his people are called the Edomites.

**Let’s Make a Deal** (vv31-32) – Jacob tests Esau’s covenant loyalty, probably knowing Esau’s character which will become more obvious in later chapters. And Esau shows he doesn’t care, exaggerating with the claim that he is about to die (belly-god). The next verses prove that he wasn’t going to die.

**Swear an Oath** (vv33-34) – Jacob grabbed the heel and took advantage of the moment, though this surely had been premeditated. He requires an oath, which again means this was done in public with witnesses. A formal, legal arrangement was made.

**In Swift Succession** (v35) – Jacob gives him bread and a stew of lentils, and then the Hebrew verbs run in quick succession: he ate, drank, arose, and went – with overwhelming thoughtlessness.

**“Thus Esau despised his birthright”** – The scriptures do not point the finger at Jacob. It doesn’t say, “and Jacob manipulated Esau and stole the birthright...” Jacob was taking what God was giving. Scripture never warns us not to be a Jacob. Scripture instead clearly warns us not to be an Esau.

**Four Responses to Covenant Promises** – Abraham is known generally for waiting for the promise. Isaac is the promise and so is known for receiving the promise. Jacob is known generally for wrestling for the promise. Esau is known for despising the promise. Jesus waited “*until the fulness of time had come*” (Gal 4:4). Jesus is the greater Isaac, the son of the promise, who received the kingdom (Psalm 2:8, Matt 28:18, Rev 11:15). Jesus wrestled for that kingdom; His heel was bruised, Satan’s head was crushed (Gen 3:15, Rom 16:20). And Jesus, weary and hungry, was tempted by Satan to break his forty-day fast and promised the kingdoms of this world if He would simply bow to Satan. Jesus mastered his appetites and refused to despise His birthright.

**How to Not Be an Esau** (Heb 12:14-17) – The book of Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians who, because of the persecution, their exile and dispersion, are tempted to return to Jerusalem and the old covenant administration and sacrifices. The book covers how Jesus is better than the angels that administered the Old Covenant, the old Levitical priesthood, the high-priests that administered the sacrifices, the sacrifices themselves, and how the patriarchs were saved even back then by faith. Therefore, he writes, run that race of faith to the end, looking to Jesus (12:1-2), receiving the discipline in trials from a loving Father (12:3-11), strengthening yourselves to press on (12:12-13). And then the warning: don't sell out all you have been given like Esau did for carnal pleasure, for immediate gratification at whatever the cost.

**Isolation, Exhaustion, and Exaggeration** – What tempts us to be an Esau is what weakened Esau into temptation. An isolated Christian is a vulnerable Christian. You will more easily despise the things of God when you are not connected and oriented towards God's church and God's people. The enemy wants you to become aloof, alone, outside, just like a lion wants to separate one antelope from the herd.

Similarly, an exhausted Christian is a vulnerable Christian. Be wise and know when circumstances have you exhausted in your battle against temptation and sin? Are you careful to get true Sabbath rest and renewal (and I mean in Christ, on His day, with His people, not in a long list of "don'ts")? And are you prepared when you know a situation will most likely lead to temptation?

And notice how temptation, especially when tired, gives way to exaggeration "I'm going to die if I don't...", or, "I just can't anymore..." Esau wasn't going to die. He was just hungry. But his exaggeration justified his foolish transaction. 1 Cor 10:13 tells us that all temptations are pretty common. Often, your talk (to yourself or others) about your problems are more of a problem than your problem. The Psalmist preaches to himself, "*Why so downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God*" (Psalm 42:5). Sometimes we have to tell ourselves (our flesh) to shut up.

**Unrepentant Tears** – Esau realized what he had done and especially when he lost the blessing, he sought for it with many tears. But sorrow and tears are not necessarily repentance. Feeling bad for the consequences of your sin is not repentance. Repentance is turning from your belly-god and confession is agreeing with God that it was a sinful, wicked idol. Lots of people will be crying in hell; but they will not be repenting (Matt 13:42).

**Don't Be an Esau Because You Have Come to Jesus** – The person who is an Esau is short-sighted and materialistic. He is living for the immediate gratification of his carnal desires. These mean more to him than the promises of God and that is why the author of Hebrews calls him an immoral and godless person.

This is not simply a moral story – "don't let your appetites rule, don't fall for the temptations of the flesh." This is deeper than that and is a warning to all covenant children (of all ages). Do not lose sight of your birthright as those marked by the covenant of grace. Do not sell that birthright, despising it, for a pot of stew – I don't care how hungry you are. That meal is too expensive. Listen - listen in and to the community where you can find protection and accountability from those who have gone before you and are running with you. Despising your covenant position leads to sorrow that never ends.

And God gives the warning because someone who is acting like Esau can repent. He can come to the Mediator of the new covenant and to the blood (the red stuff) that speaks better things than Abel. We are not just ethical people, religious do-gooders. We are free and forgiven people, freed from the belly-god and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Run the race knowing that there is nothing better than the faithfulness of God your Father and the inheritance that is yours in Jesus Christ.