



Esau: the man who blew it. **(Gen 25-27)**

Have you ever seen a cartoon called *The Cramp Twins*. They are about two non-identical twins, Lucien a nice intellectual boy and Wayne who is a bit of a yob and purple! The Bible has its own Cramp Twins, one called Hairy (also called Red) and the other Grasper.

Originally I was going to do a two part series on Jacob, but as I studied the story of Jacob and Esau, I found Esau a much more fascinating character. So next week we shall be having a look at Jacob's experience at Bethel and this week we'll have a look at this man, who was afforded so much grace but who blew it because of his attitude to the blessings God had given his family.

Isaac, like Abraham before him was the recipient of God's grace and part of God's promises to Abraham. And we read how Rebekah, Isaac's wife had twin sons and things were not quite right from the start:

25: 5 The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau . 26 After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

Now that's unusual. Esau means hairy, because he was rather hairy. But Jacob means a grasper. And we know that Jacob was a grasper and probably that showed in his character from an early stage on. Esau as the firstborn had all the rights to his fathers herds, possessions and promises. Such was the grace given to this man.

But we see in the end that all the promises and possessions went to Jacob - the Grasper. Why? Is this a sign that crime pays? We do know from the prophecy made to Rebekah before his birth that Jacob would rule Esau:

25:22 The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23 The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

But trying to steal these things from Esau was still immoral and as we will see next week, God's purposes were not achieved in the way that Jacob wanted but in the way God planned it. We will see how even Jacob, the Grasper finds God's favour and forgiveness next week and he truly was blessed by God - an object of grace - despite his failings.

But Esau was not an innocent dupe of Jacob's grasping. Here was a man who had it all but seems to have thrown it all away. I find Esau an excellent picture of how easy it is to despise God's grace and lose the blessing. It's there as a warning and an encouragement to us?

So how did he lose it?

🕒 He didn't value his birthright

25: 27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. 29 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. 30 He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) 31 Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." 32 "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" 33 But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

Esau and Jacob were different. Jacob stayed around the tents but Esau was a hunter. What was the significance? Isaac and his family were nomads. From what we know of Abraham, they were a powerful family. The family leader had to be around to manage the flocks and control the servants. That wasn't Esau. He was off hunting all the time - and not just game as we shall see soon.

But he was the eldest son and had the birthright - the man who would inherit all when Isaac died. But it wasn't just a straight case of robbery by Jacob. I can see quite how he felt about Esau off hunting whilst he dealt with the flocks and herds. He would get nothing but was responsible for the tents. It didn't seem fair. The incident that led Jacob to grasp the birthright was a case in point.

Jacob knew that Esau would easily give the birthright away because of his disregard of the family and for his inheritance. And so it was true.

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He sold his birthright for a mess of pottage - a bowl of red stew. What a fool! He gained for himself the nickname "Red" because of his stupidity - that's what Edom means. True, he was tricked, but as I've already said Jacob was also wrong to con it out of him.

One - nil to the Grasper and Red was left, well, pretty red-faced. Why? He knew he was an object of God's grace as revealed in the family of Abraham and Isaac - yet he threw it all away because he did his own thing and it clearly didn't matter to him.

One of the biggest tragedies I see in the lives of Christians - the disregard. Do my own thing. Think my own way. And we spurn the grace of God. The consequences were awful for Esau and can be awful for us if we ignore God. It gets worse though...

🕒 He chose a worldly way

26: 34 When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. 35 They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Esau went a-roving and picked up two Hittite wives. Parents did not approve. He hitched up with pagan wives: he cared so little about the things of God. Not just a case of rebellion but spurning the face of God. It was symptomatic of his attitude. He was an object of grace but it just didn't bother him. To please parents he later married a daughter of Ishmael but that didn't do much to commend him.

Do you know what grieves our heavenly Father? When we run after things that are not of Him. Whether it was Hittite wives or daughters of Ishmael, Esau displeased his parents. When our interests don't lie in the things of God then our Father is grieved.

What things do we do that grieve our Father? What things do we do that make Him angry. Do we think we will get away with it? What about us grieves God right now. What unconfessed sin? what sin that we don't think God has noticed. We think He's like a speed camera don't we? We kind of expect Him to be on the A47 in one of the laybys and therefore outside of church we do what we like. But He is a God who always sees us; who always finds out all our sins - even if they are just in our minds.

👤 He lost his family's respect - because they conned him!

27:30 After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. 31 He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing." 32 His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" "I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau." 33 Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him--and indeed he will be blessed!" 34 When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me--me too, my father!" 35 But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing."

36 Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?" 37 Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?" 38 Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud.

39 His father Isaac answered him, "Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above. 40 You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck." 41 Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Esau was well and truly conned by Jacob and Rebekah. Now the two of them may have been thinking they were doing God's will in insuring the older would serve the younger. But that was God's prerogative to do in His will and time. God's will is not achieved by lies and deception. We'll see God's way next week.

There's no nice way of putting it. What happened here was completely unjust. God allowed Esau to lose something else that was his. Why does God allow this kind of thing to happen? Theologians call it the permissive will of God. God allows us to suffer the consequences of our sin by not intervening when an injustice like this one occurs. After all, our sin is our responsibility and God despite this we see God acting graciously to this family in the end. Before then, they all lost out because of their sins.

Frankly, the family of Isaac were not the model godly family were they? There was favouritism by the parents, one son not engaged with the family's affairs - Esau and the other a grasper who wanted to rob his brother and the mother Rebekah quite happy to make sure her favourite got one over on Red. Isaac was deceived and he suffered the grief of that. What a rum lot! By the end neither Isaac, Rebekah or Jacob had any respect for Esau and he lost everything.

Let's not make too many parallel's with God's family here though. Unlike Isaac and Rebekah, our Father is the model parent and He does not favour one person above another. But He does allow us to face the consequences of our sin.

It was all going to end in tears for Isaac's family - and it did. Jacob, the Grasper, had to sell for his life, Esau held a grudge, Rebekah lost her favourite and Isaac who thought he was going to die, hung on a sick and weak man for some years after giving the blessing to the wrong man.

Let's never make any bones about doing our own thing and not walking in God's will. We may think it's OK to sin because we think we will never get caught. We may think it's OK not to spend time with our Father even we therefore will not know His will. We think that it's OK to live our lives in the way we want without ever asking our Father what He thinks. We may never seek His guidance.

But hey, we think that's OK because we're not really evil like the prostitutes and the criminals and those dodgy youths that hang around in the market place. We're respectable. We're OK. So was Esau. Apart from his dodgy wives, there is no real evidence that he was a particularly evil man. He was just someone who spurned the grace of God by neglecting what God had given him as his birthright - his family and the promises God had made to his father and grandfather.

That's the root of where we're at. We may be respectable and whatever; but rebellion by spurning God's grace has consequences. As we come around the table this evening we remember the broken body of Christ and His shed blood and we remember again the grace that was given to us.

Then we think of our lives, our shortcomings and see where we have been an Esau. Then we realise how often we spurn that grace by our attitude and our disobedience. We are going to come before the table this evening. Let's come in repentance

Prayer of repentance

There is a sense in which that this story has a happy ending. The brothers were reconciled in later years and God dealt with the Grasper as we will find out next week. As for Esau, he got his land where the rain didn't fall to much and he was the father of the warrior race of Edom or as we should call it Red. The nickname stood. He became a great nation and did well for himself. But he got a second chance.

Are we ready to turn to our God this evening. There is a second chance if we've thrown away our birthright and not received the blessing. Maybe we've passed over things in lie that God wanted us to do and we didn't want to do. maybe we are suffering the consequences of it. But this evening we can like Esau get that second chance or maybe that third chance; or fourth chance. God is always one that gives new opportunities to those who turn to Him in repentance. We saw in the story of Esau, he missed out on the main promises, but his never ceased in being a child of the promises made to Abraham and Isaac despite his sin.

Let's look at the table this evening and realise we have forgiveness in the blood of Christ and as we have repented we can move on in Him and bring glory to Him afresh as we take the new opportunities that God has given us.