



The Cramp Twins. (Gen 25 & 27)

Have you ever seen a cartoon called The Cramp Twins ? They are about two non-identical twins, Lucien an intellectual boy and Wayne who is a bit of a yob and purple! Under the way these stories go you'd expect Lucien to be goody-goody and Wayne to be evil, but in their stories Wayne can be quite decent and Lucien quite evil. It's a horrible cartoon actually but it's not far off a real true story: the Bible's terrible twins, one called Hairy (also known as Red) and the other Grabber.

Who? Let me give you their Bible names – Esau and Jacob, the sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Things were not quite right from their birth:

Genesis 25: 25 The first one was reddish, and his skin was like a hairy robe, so he was named Esau.
26 The second one was born holding on tightly to the heel of Esau, so he was named Jacob.

Now that's unusual. Esau means hairy, because he was rather hairy. But Jacob means a Grabber. Esau as the first-born had all the rights to his father's herds, possessions and promises. Such was the grace given to this man by virtue of being born minutes before his brother. But we see in the end that all the promises and possessions went to Jacob – the Grabber because Jacob grabbed them from him.

I wonder how Jacob justified his actions? We do know from the prophecy made to Rebekah before his birth that Jacob would rule Esau:

Gen 25:22 She was going to have twins, and before they were born, they struggled against each other in her womb. She said, "Why should something like this happen to me?" So she went to ask the Lord for an answer. 23 The Lord said to her, "Two nations are within you; You will give birth to two rival peoples. One will be stronger than the other; The older will serve the younger."

But trying to take these things from Esau was still immoral but God's purposes were not to be achieved in the way that Jacob thought they should be but in the way God planned it. Actually he never knew God's blessing until he encountered God later, for example at Bethel. It was only after that he was truly blessed by God. He ended up 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 the plot?

■ He didn't value his birthright

Gen 25:27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skilled hunter, a man who loved the outdoor life, but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home. 28 Isaac preferred Esau, because he enjoyed eating the animals Esau killed, but Rebecca preferred Jacob. 29 One day while Jacob was cooking some bean soup, Esau came in from

hunting. He was hungry so and said to Jacob, "I'm starving; give me some of that red stuff." (That is why he was called Edom (which means red). 31 Jacob answered, "I will give it to you if you give me your rights as the first-born son." 32 Esau said, "All right! I am about to die; what good will my rights do me then?" 33 Jacob answered, "First make a vow that you will give me your rights." Esau made the vow and gave his rights to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave him some bread and some of the soup. He ate and drank and then got up and left. That was all Esau cared about his rights as the first-born son.

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 for the red-headed Red. What a fool! He gained for himself the nickname "Red" because of his stupidity - that's what Edom means - red-headed, Red. True, he was tricked, but Jacob was also wrong to con it out of him.

One - nil to the Grabber 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. I am redeemed, I am loved, I am the object of God's love, I am bought with a great price. But despite that I'll do my own thing. And we forget all the goodness and promises of God given us. And we spurn the grace of God. We despise our birthright. 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

Gen 26: 34 When Esau was 40 years old, he married two Hittite women, Judith the daughter of Beerli, and Basemath the daughter of Elon. 35 They made life miserable for Isaac and Rebecca.

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 that he was happy to link up with pagans rather than find people who were more compatible with him and the family's faith in 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 wasn't much to commend him either.

Do you know what grieves our heavenly Father? When we run after things that are not of Him. Whether it was Hittite wives or a daughter 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 A14 in one of the lay-bys and therefore we do what we like unless He's obviously around. But He is a God who always sees us wherever we are; 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!

Genesis 27:30 Isaac finished giving his blessing, and as soon as Jacob left, his brother Esau came in from hunting. 31 He also cooked some tasty food and took it to his father. He said, "Please, father, sit up and eat some of the meat that I have brought you, so that you can give me your blessing."

32 "Who are you?" Isaac asked.

"Your elder son Esau," he answered.

33 Isaac began to tremble and shake all over, and he asked, "Who was it, then, who killed an animal and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came. I gave him my final blessing, and so it is his for ever."

34 When Esau heard this, he cried out loudly and bitterly and said, "Give me your blessing also, father!"

35 Isaac answered, "Your brother came and deceived me. He has taken away your blessing."

36 Esau said, "This is the second time that he has cheated me. No wonder his name is Jacob.

He took my rights as the first-born son, and now he has taken away my blessing. Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"

37 Isaac answered, "I have already made him master over you, and I have made all his relatives his slaves. I have given him corn and wine. Now there is nothing that I can do for you, my son!"

38 Esau continued to plead with his father: "Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me too, father!" He began to cry.

39 Then Isaac said to him,

"No dew from heaven for you,

No fertile fields for you.

40 You will live by your sword,

But be your brother's slave.

Yet when you rebel,

You will break away from his control."

41 Esau hated Jacob, because his father had given Jacob the blessing. He thought, "The time to mourn my father's death is near; then I will kill Jacob."

In the end God allowed Esau to lose something else that was his by right but I think we can see that he was not altogether taking God or his family seriously. But that still doesn't excuse what Jacob and Rebekah did to him. 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. They pre-empted Him. God's will is not achieved by lies and deception but Jacob had to go over a decade further on before God called him to account by which time he's conned Laban too, not that Laban was particularly whiter than snow either.

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 Grabber 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 parallels 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. He treats us with love and grace even though we can be just as dodgy as Isaac's family.

But like 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 Grabber, had to flee 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 though we'll not be able to discern His will because we're not communicating. 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. Living like that as a Christian leaves us in fear and uncertainty.

One of the biggest problems for older Christians is think we are OK because we are God's people and have been for a while and take our faith for granted. 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.

At the start of another year, God wants to be a Father who desires that we are close to Him, so we understand who we are, that we know His will because we talk regularly to Him and read His word, because we have a trusting open relationship.

Prayer of repentance.

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