



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 27: 1-46

“The Stolen Blessing”

TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading this morning is from Genesis chapter 27, and this is a rather important chapter and while it is 46 verses long, I am going to take the liberty of reading the entire chapter.

Fortunately, the verses are relatively short for the most part, but it is important that we get the whole story of the stolen blessing. So will you listen now as I read Genesis chapter 27,

“Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, ‘My son.’ And he said to him, ‘Here I am.’ And Isaac said: ‘Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. Now then please take your gear, your quiver and your bow and go out to the field and hunt game for me; and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die.’ And Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, ‘Behold I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, ‘Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me that I may eat and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death.’ Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me two choice kids from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for you father, such as he loves. Then you shall bring it to your father that he may eat so that he may bless you before his death.’ And Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, ‘Behold, Esau my brother is a

hairy man and I am smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me; then I shall be as a deceiver in his sight (that word is more likely "mocker" as some of the margins have it and what he means is that Isaac's blindness might seem to be mocked by him) then I shall be a mocker in his sight and shall bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.' But his mother said to him: 'Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice and go. Get them for me.' So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her eldest son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob, her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob. Then he came to his father and said, 'My father.' And he said: 'Here I am. Who are you, my son?' And Jacob said to his father: 'I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me.' And Isaac said to his son. 'How is it that you have it so quickly my son?' And he said, 'Because the Lord your God caused it to happen to me.' Then Isaac said to Jacob, 'Please come close, that I may feel you my son, whether you really are my son Esau or not.' So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.' And he did not recognize him because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. And he said, 'Are you really my son Esau?' And he said 'I am.' So he said, 'Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game that I may bless you.' And he brought it to him and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Please come close and kiss me, my son.' So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, "See the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed. Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine. May people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be master of your brothers and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you and blessed be those who bless you. Now it came about as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his

father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. Then he also made savory food and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, ‘Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me.’ But Isaac his father said to him, ‘Who are you?’ And he said, ‘I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.’ Then Isaac trembled violently.”

The Hebrew clause here is exceedingly strong. In fact there are three things about it that make it strong. There is, of course, the word that means to tremble, and Isaac trembled with trembling. It's a cognate accusative which strengthens the idea, but then there is an adjective added "with great trembling," and then an adverbial phrase is added to, literally, “up to exceedingly.” So it really means that Isaac trembled with a great tremble, trembling excessively or trembled excessively.

“And he said, ‘Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.’ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, ‘Bless me, even me also, O my father!’ And he said, ‘Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.’ Then he said: ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.’ And he said, ‘Have you not reserved the blessing for me?’ But Isaac answered and said to Esau, ‘Behold I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?’ And Esau said to his father: ‘Do you have only one blessing my father? Bless me evenly also, O’ my father.’ So Esau lifted up his voice and wept.”

I cannot help but point out here that, when we feel sorry for the pathetic crying of Esau, we should remember that this is the same man who rebelliously sold his birthright, swore on at the time of the sale, cared so little for it that he was disinterested in it. And now, he is complaining really

because of what he has previously done. So temper your feelings of pity and compassion for Esau by remembering what kind of person that he really has been. Verse 39,

“Then Isaac, his father answered and said to him, ‘Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling and away from the dew of heaven from above. And by your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve; but it shall come about when you become restless that you shall break his yoke from your neck.’ So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, ‘The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’ Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob and said to him, ‘Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you. ‘Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!’ (Now, Rebekah, as you can see appears as a very wise, clever woman. Well, she is a woman, wise and clever, therefore. [Laughter] But at any rate, you can see that she is extremely clever because she is going to use the subterfuge of marrying another Hittite daughter as the means of gaining Isaac's sympathy with the flight of Jacob. And of course that is exactly what happens because who wants to have three Hittite daughters-in-law? So she knew her husband very well and she cleverly appeals to him. And she also scared Jacob by saying, that Esau was going to kill him and that was enough for Jacob to want to go too.) ‘And stay with him a few days until your brother’s fury subsides, until your brother’s anger against you subsides and he forgets what you said to him. Then I shall send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?’ (What she means by that last statement is that if Esau killed Jacob, then the avenger of blood in the family, according to Hebrew law would then probably kill Esau so that she would lose two sons.) And Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I’m tired of living because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?’”

That last verse probably belongs to the next chapter more suitably. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

The subject for this morning is “The Stolen Blessing or Isaac’s Unequal Fight.” Among the many spiritual blessings of the story of the stolen blessing are these, the sinfulness of doing evil that good may come. That is illustrated in the conduct of Rebekah. Or to put it in other words, “the end does not justify the means”. The inevitability of the consequences of sin is illustrated here too, or, be sure your sin will find you out. All four of the principals in this story, Isaac, Esau, Jacob, and Rebekah are guilty. Lost opportunities are often never regained or the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Those who despise God’s salvation in youth cannot always obtain it in manhood or age. Esau illustrates that.

Deceivers are themselves often deceived. There is a difference between remorse and repentance. Esau had a great deal of remorse, crying out with bitter cries. But for repentance, Esau did not know the meaning of repentance. The criminality of following evil advice is contrary to the light of the word and the light of conscience, and it would seem that all of the characters in this little story are guilty there too. Certainly, Jacob was following the advice of Rebekah. And certainly Isaac was, in the sense that he was going contrary to the word of God and even wanting to bless Esau when he must have known quite well that the blessing belonged to Jacob now, and then he must have remembered at least the original oracle of prophecy given by God, “And the elder shall serve the younger.”

And then finally the wickedness of trying to overturn the wheel of heaven, or to put it in other words, the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men. Isn't it interesting that in this story in which everybody seems to be trying to subvert the will of God, in the final analysis what exactly happens is exactly in accordance with the will of God? He accomplishes his purposes by means of man’s crimes, without relieving them of guilt or being himself the author of sin. This is what we proclaim, that he uses the wickedness of men to accomplish his purposes but men are still guilty, and God is not the author of sin.

The chief lesson, in my opinion, is the last one, captured in the clause, “Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” And in this story, we certainly see that. There are some texts of Scripture that give essentially the same truth. The writer of the Proverbs says, “The mind of men plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps,” or as Isaiah the Prophet, put it, citing from the prophecy that the Lord gave him, “My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all my good pleasure. That I think is really the primary lesson of this chapter that God will do all of his pleasure. And though Rebekah may maneuver and scheme and palter and do all of the things that she might trying to reverse what she thought might take place. God uses all of these things to accomplish his basic prophetic will, “The elder shall serve the younger.” It illustrates the fact that men cannot frustrate the purposes of God. That is something for us to remember. It affects all of our understanding of divine revelation, God is sovereign. He is sovereign in all of his plans and purposes and he accomplishes every one of them. He is never defeated or conquered by men. And let me tell you this, that when you come to an understanding of a God like this and really come to an understanding of it, it will make a difference in your life, and in the tone and disposition of your Christianity.

Now, we look at the account and it opens with a request of Esau by Isaac and also a promise. Now, we will misjudge the situation if we overlook what all of the things that all the Scriptures say about this incident and particularly, that which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says about it in chapter 12, verses 16 and 17 of his book. We must remember that basically, Esau had, because of his lack of interest in spiritual things, traded away his birthright. And when he had traded away his birthright, he also traded away his blessing, for the blessing went with the birthright. So that makes all four of the participants in these schemes guilty, almost equally at fault. Isaac, now whether he knew that Esau had sold his birthright or not, he knew the prophecy of God, “The elder shall serve the younger.”

Esau, in agreeing to Isaac’s plan to bless him, broke his own oath, for he had sworn to Jacob, that Jacob had the birthright, with which went the blessing. And then, of course, Rebekah

and Jacob, who were at least in this incident, ones who stood out a little more faithfully than the others, we have no indication that they rested their case with the Lord, regardless of the scheme that Isaac and Esau might have imagined. They might well have said, “Well, Isaac and Esau may think that they are going to arrange for Esau to be blessed, but God has already said that the elder shall serve the younger, and nothing that men will do can possibly subvert the will of God. We rest in the will of God.” That, of course, is not what Rebekah did nor is it what Jacob did. So we find that all of the four are at fault.

Isaac was determined in spite of everything in the word of God, to see that Esau got the blessing. Evidently, in his latter years, he had become very close to Esau because he loved venison. He loved that savory food that Esau cooked. Have you ever noticed that this often happens to people? It even happens to believing people that in their latter days, they live to eat, and it becomes a weakness. And evidently it was a big weakness with Isaac. Several times we read about, “A savory dish for me such as I love;” verse 4, verse 9: “As a savory dish for your father, such as he loves.” Verse 14: “And his mother made savory food such as his father loved.” So you get the picture of a man who has become weakened by the materialism that has entered into his life.

Now he knew the word of God. He also knew that Jacob was plainly superior so far as spiritual interests were concerned to Esau. He also, no doubt, had heard about the agreement and had heard how Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. And then he also knew Esau’s obvious indifference to the things of the Lord, but in spite of that, he is determined that he is going to give the blessing to Esau. That is a very sad picture.

Now we also read here in verse 1 that Isaac was old. Scriptures do not, however, say that that is a reason for the things that he did. His eyes were too dim to see. He was about 137 years old, and he thought he was going to die and they thought he was going to die but we know he lived to be a 180 years of age, so this was a long way off. They waited a long time for their inheritances. When we read here that his eyes were too dim to see, well this is one of the warning bells that God gives us. I look out over the audience and some of you are already wearing glasses. You are young and God,

in his wonderful grace, makes it known to us, generally speaking, before we die that we are on the way down. And there are people wise enough to take a little accounting of themselves at that time and to seek to make some preparation for the end because it is sure to come if Jesus Christ does not come first. His eyes are too dim to see so he is going to make a threefold preparation for the end. He is going to make his will and he is going to bless Esau. Incidentally, oral blessings were valid in those days. We know this from such things as the Nuzi tablets in which we have illustrations of this, an oral will or testament. He also lays aside his cares. He is going to give over the active running of things to his sons and he is going to give them a blessing.

Now, I must say that we feel a little sad looking at Isaac, because can this really be the same Isaac who submissively, as a little boy, carried that wood for the sacrifice with his father Abraham up Mount Moriah, who wondered about the lamb and then who submitted very, very submissively to Abraham, his father, to be offered as a sacrifice? It almost seems as if we are talking about two different people. Here is a scheming old man seeking to defy the word of God and there was the young man submissive and obedient to his father and also to the will of God. I wonder why? Well, we know the Scriptures say that the man waxed great and went forward and grew until he became very great. He not only inherited all of Abraham's property, but he himself enlarged his estate. He was an extremely wealthy man. And it is just possible that the prosperity of Isaac was his own undoing. How often is that the case? If you live long enough, as a Christian, you will discover that many who are fresh and vital and interested in the days of their spiritual youth, in their latter days when their properties have accumulated and they become wealthy and influential, the spiritual interests are crowded out. Prosperity is one of the great enemies of the Christian faith. There are men sitting in this audience who have this as a great temptation. You have an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have come to know him as your own personal Savior. You know that you possess the forgiveness of sins, but your money is increasing. Your financial resources are growing. The demands that they make on your time are growing and you are faced with the problem of priorities. It is possible that is the problem that Isaac had and he yielded to it. It weakened him, and in the end

he was not the man it seems he was in the beginning. Was it just his lack of backbone? He had a very easygoing disposition. In some ways, that was good, but it's possible for it to be very bad. Perhaps that was part of his difficulty. Or was it just gluttony? Because the text, as I pointed out, makes a great deal over this savory meat that he loved. Whatever it was, it's clear that Isaac, near the end of his life, does not appear very well in the record. One of the commentators had said, "The man who, on the supposed point of death, thinks most of all of a good dish of delicious venison is not likely to shine as a specially brilliant star in the heavenly firmament."

Well, the words that Isaac spoke to Esau were overheard by Rebekah. Now Rebekah is one of those women who makes quick decisions, and generally very clever ones, as I mentioned in the Scripture reading. And I must say I have to admire Rebekah because she heard what was said and she knew immediately that that was contrary to the will of God. The only problem is that she wanted to do it herself. And so like a submissive wife, she acts immediately to overthrow the plans of her husband. [Laughter] But interestingly enough, ladies, she demands obedience from Jacob in carrying out her scheme, because after all Jacob, will not the Scripture say, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," and in the same passage in which it says, "A woman is to be submissive to the husband, the children are to obey their parents." Well I have a little bit of sympathy for Rebekah because of course what she was seeking to do was ultimately the will of God and while she was seeking to do it in her own way, at least, she was seeking to do that which was right.

Isn't it interesting too that all of this seems to depend on the evidence of the five senses, sight, smell, feeling, hearing, taste? And taste is the thing that was ultimately Isaac's undoing, for Rebekah prepared those goats and it tasted to him exactly like venison. It is an illustration, by the way, for those of you who are philosophers, that empiricists have difficulty if their source of truth is experience or empiricistic. So everything hinges on the five senses.

Now Rebekah, in beautiful, prodigal love, but warped because it was at the expense of conjugal love, devises a scheme: She calls in Jacob, she tells Jacob to go to the flock of goats, to take two choice kids from there that she may prepare them as a savory dish for your father such as he

loves. Now, I do not know about this. I just introduced this as a suggestion. It is only a suggestion, mind you. I think that every time that Esau prepared Isaac that tasty venison, it rankled Rebekah. Because after all, she was the woman; she was the cook. And here was her son, and Isaac seemed to like the food of her son better than her food. And not only that, he took a long time to prepare it. And he acted like a professional chef when he did it. And Isaac, the old fool, liked it better than the food that she was giving. So back in the kitchen, she often would say, "Why, I could fix a couple of goats so nicely that he wouldn't even know the difference and I could do it in half the time too." And so here was her opportunity. So, she said, "Go get two goats and I can fix those goats and make them into savory dish just exactly like he loves." Now Jacob objects at first, but it is only by expediency. He doesn't say, "Now that's wrong mother." But he says, "Esau's a hairy man and I'm a smooth man and he'll feel me and he'll find this out." So it's pure expediency that he objects in the beginning. But she insists, "Your responsibility as a child is to obey your parents. Do what I say. Your curse that you talk about be on me." Jacob is a weak man. He went out and got weak at this time. This is the man who's going to be Israel, the prince with God later on, but he's still Jacob, the supplanter, now. And so, Jacob went and he brought the goats to his mother and his mother made the food and she did it quickly because Esau was going to come in at anytime and this had all to be done in a hurry.

And she took the best garments of Esau that smelled like Esau and she put them on Jacob and then she took the skins of the kids of the goat — I guess this is from underneath the belly of the animals where you get the cashmere — it is nice and smooth and yet just a little bit like the hairy animal. And she put them on Jacob, her younger son, put it on the smooth part of his neck and also on his hands and she gave him the food and she sent him in to the father.

And so Jacob came into Isaac and he said, "My father." And Isaac said, "Here I am. Who are you my son?" He didn't quite recognize the voice because he wasn't expecting Jacob to be there. And Jacob says, "I'm Esau, your firstborn and I've done as you told me. Get up, sit and eat of the game that you may bless me." He too is in a hurry because Esau may come at any moment. And so

now we read of the details of the deception. Evidently, incidentally the sin of Esau and Isaac is more heinous than that of, I started to say Jake and Becky, but Jacob and Rebekah, and the reason for this evidently is that in the case of Isaac and Esau, there is a plain attempt to go contrary to the word of God. And in the case of Jacob and Rebekah, his mother, they at least were seeking in their own way to accomplish the will of God.

I noticed the experience of Jacob. He retreats from what is right to expediency and then to sin, and then to sins. The whole sin compounded of this relationship, answering the questions that were false and lies, and finally traces it all to God. When Isaac says "How is it that you have this so quickly my son?" He says, "Because the Lord your God caused it to happen to me." He believes in the sovereignty of God at least in words. And so he is a deplorably weak man and he illustrates this that once you yield to sin, even in of expediency, all the other sins come so much more easily. One of the commentators likens it to a little boy with a gang of thieves who manages to get in the house by entering the window and then having gone in the house goes to the front door and opens it up so all the burglars can enter. And so the one sin of expediency, refusing to say, "That's wrong mother," leads to all of the other sins that make up the deception of Jacob.

You know, we have some other instances in the Bible about the way of things that were done sinfully, but which God allowed to happen. Remember the Hebrew midwives in the days of Moses, who disobeyed the Pharaoh contrary to the teaching of the word, but the Scriptures say that God blessed the midwives, because the sin of Pharaoh was much greater than the sin of the midwives. And we have the instance of Rahab, which has puzzled a number of people, because Rahab lied to the King of Jericho saying the Hebrew spies were not there or had not been there. And God blessed Rahab and, in fact, she appears on Holy Scripture as one of the members of the great line of the faithful because she did receive the spies and send them out another way.

And so there are illustrations in the word of God of God blessing individuals even when they were lying, because the sins of others were that much greater, and even in the case of the midwives and in the case of Rahab, there was at bottom, a basic relationship of faith. And that is

what we shall see here. Whatever you say about Rebekah and Jacob that they did not act in a very lovely way, they at least believed the promises of the word of God and they believed there was such a thing as a blessing and that blessing was important and that important promises went with that blessing. So they had that basic relationship of faith.

Now, finally as a result of the deception of Jacob, Isaac blesses Jacob and I want you to notice that blessing, particularly verse 29, I just think how presumptuous this would have been if as Isaac really thought He were blessing Esau, "May people serve you and nations bow down to you, be a master of your brothers and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you and blessed be those who bless you." In other words, it is a direct reversal of what God had said previously with regard to Jacob and Esau. And I think you can see the awful presumption of Isaac in thinking that he was blessing Esau with this blessing that belonged to Jacob. That wasn't long after that that Esau came in. He made the savory food such as his father loved, and he came into his presence in order to give him his food and receive the blessing. And when he came in, Isaac said to him "Who are you?" He said "I'm your son, your firstborn, Esau;" notice, "your firstborn, I have those privileges." He forgot what God has said and he's forgotten the fact that he had sold it to Jacob and furthermore had sworn that it should be Jacob's. So he lies. He is the firstborn, but he speaks as if he is to get the blessing and he is not. And Isaac, as it begins to dawn on him of what has really happened, the truth comes home to him like a mighty blast of icy wind. Isaac trembled fervently, Isaac trembled with a great trembling exceedingly, the Hebrew text puts it. You see, he is beginning to realize he is fighting God, and he sees that God has spoken through him in spite of himself. He realizes that now that he has blessed that individual, whoever he was, that God has overthrown his own purposes and caused him in his ignorance to lay a blessing upon someone that he did not intend to bless.

Now you can see one thing about Isaac here that's important. You can see the faith of Isaac even in his sin, because he adds, yes, and he shall be blessed. He knows he is fighting God. He knows also he's been defeated in the battle with God and that he's been caused to bless that he did

not intend to bless because God is carrying out his will. And he sees on this, a significant thing. Later on incidentally, Jacob will bless. And he too will see in how God caused him to cross his hands as Manasseh and Ephraim stood before him. But God overrules in the affairs of men and causes all His purpose to stand.

When the Lord Jesus was crucified on Calvary's cross, Pilate thinking that he would mock the Jews, for he knew that people said that Jesus was King of Jews or that he was claiming to be king the Jews, and he knew also that the Jews did not really think he was their King, and so he would mock the Jews because he didn't like the Jews by putting above the cross, the superscription, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." He did it mockingly. He would make fun of the Jews and he would say, "This is really your King, this is the kind of the king you have, he is nothing like Caesar and furthermore, he has his kingdom and he has his subjects, and his subjects are these two robbers that are hanging by his side." It was all a big joke to him.

But when he put, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," he didn't know it that he was writing what God intended to write. And furthermore, he wrote it in Latin and in Greek and in Hebrew so that the whole world could know. And in addition when the Jews objected, he finally said, "What I have, written I have written." And really, what he has written he has not written. God wrote those words, but he used the Roman puppet to put them above the cross in that superscription. You see, God accomplishes his purpose even when we do not realize it.

And Isaac says, "Yes and he shall be blessed." He sees God through him in spite of himself. Now when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father." These pathetic, bitter cries of a strong man who now is screaming like a woman and crying like a baby, but of course, Esau cannot undo his past act.

Now the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes this the basis of a very important truth. In the 6th chapter, he talks about those who cannot be renewed unto repentance, because they have fallen away. And then in the 12th chapter, he talks about the same Esau and he says about this Esau

in the context that he has failed of the grace of God. And speaking about him, he also says some rather terrible things. He says that there should no immoral or godless person like Esau who sold his own birthright for a single meal for you know that even afterwards when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance.

Some have interpreted that as a place of repentance in Isaac's mind, that is, Isaac wouldn't change his mind after having blessed Jacob. Well, that is a possible interpretation, but it is more likely that it means simply that he found no place for repentance within his own heart. Remorse, yes, Esau felt remorse. He felt regret, but it was regret not over what he had done but over the consequences to himself. He had lost his blessing and lost his birthright. And so he found no place for repentance though he sought for it, that is, the blessing, not repentance. He sought for it, the blessing, with tears.

You see, it is possible for a man to have a great deal of remorse because he feels the loss that has come because he did not act spiritually. By repentance it is possible for a person to have great opportunities to have Holy Spirit bring a certain amount of conviction and to turn away from that and to reach the stage of retributive judgment and Esau had reached that stage. He found no place for repentance, though he sought the blessing with tears. And so Esau then becomes the illustration of a trapped creature.

One of the commentators on the Epistle of the Hebrews wrote, “Those tears of Esau, the sensuous, wild, impulsive man, almost like the cry of some trapped creature, are among the most pathetic in the Bible.” He could not undo the past. Now, I think there is something very important here. And I am going to save it for, just in a few moments, for the conclusion, but I want you, in case you have some feelings of pity and compassion for Esau and some feelings of contempt for Jacob, well, in the first place that's a sign of our own crooked nature that we read this account in that way. But I want you to notice how the real Esau is when he stands up and when you read verse 41, the real Esau stands up. “So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, ‘The days of mourning for my father are near; then

I will kill my brother Jacob.” There is the real Esau. This indifferent, well if you want to call him loveable, carefree, sportsman, this man who loved hunting that men admired and that Isaac admired and whose food Isaac loved, has now become the bitter, vindictive neurotic that he was all along deep down in his heart. And you can see the true nature of the man. He is going to murder Jacob.

Say what you will about Jacob that he is not a pleasant character at this stage, but basically he wanted the birthright. He wanted the blessing and that he must have that blessing because that blessing meant a relationship to God and to the promises of God that meant something to him. He was a man of faith and God honors man of faith. He does not expect us to be perfect. We are not perfect. That's why we have the doctrine of sanctification in the Bible as I have been saying. That is why he saves in one moment and spends 40 years with some of us trying to sanctify us, and not only trying to but he ultimately succeeds. And every one of the saints shall ultimately be sanctified. So Esau's murderous design reveals who he is.

Well, we said a few words about the last verses of the chapter. Let me conclude. As we said, the chief lesson is God's sovereignty. All these rival stratagems, the stratagem of Rebekah and Jacob and Isaac and Esau have only succeeded in doing what, well, what we read in the Book of Acts, "Whatsoever God's hand and His purpose had predestined to occur," to use the words of the Scripture. The unhappy story of Esau has been repeated times without number in Christian history.

The Bible tells us to bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I want to speak for just a few moments to you who are in Believers Chapel. You have the privilege of hearing the word of God proclaimed in this pulpit constantly. I do not claim that this is the greatest exposition of the Scriptures that you hear Sunday after Sunday but it is true to the teaching of the word of God. Sunday after Sunday, the word of God is faithfully proclaimed whether I am here or others are here. Throughout all of the classes in this local church, the word of God is proclaimed. It is possible to sit under the word of God and to treat the word of God like Esau treated his own birthright and his blessing, to sell it for a mess of pottage. You young men, it is possible for you to be so concerned about other things that you sell your spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage. It's

even possible you give away your purity for the passion of a moment. You, young women, will give away your virginity for the passion of a moment.

You mothers, who have children whom you love, whom you desire to succeed in life, and you give yourselves so completely to them, omitting spiritual things that they grow up loving the things of the world; the material things, the fleshly things, the sensual things. You sell your birthright for a mess of pottage.

You men, who ought to be the spiritual heads of your family, you turn over things to your wife, do not care about your children, think that the church is to do the task that you are supposed to do, while you are interested in your business and in your pleasure, and in the other things that make up most of your daily life and thus you sell your birthright for a mess of pottage.

And you know, men, you who preach and teach the word of God, it is entirely possible for those of us who preach the word of God to put the things of the Lord in second place. You see Esau is an admonition for all of us. He is an admonition for mothers and for fathers and young men and young women and for children too. The Bible even speaks about that we are firstborn sons and we have certain privileges and certain blessings. Oh, may God help us to give first place in our lives to the things of the Lord and not neglect the things of the Spirit.

Many years ago a Welsh minister began his sermon by leaning over the pulpit and saying in a very solemn air, "Friends, I have a question to ask. I cannot answer it. You cannot answer it. If an angel from heaven were here he could not answer it or if a devil from hell were here he could not answer it," and there was a quietness in the auditorium and finally he said in a quiet voice, the question is this, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" So I say to you Christian believers first, by the neglect of spiritual things, by the putting of spiritual things second in your life, there is a neglect that has ultimately eternal consequences.

May God speak to your heart in a very solemn way. It would not hurt if you went home and got bound by your bed and made confession of your sins and neglect, and indifference, and lethargy in spiritual things and ask God to give you what you lack and if you are here in this audience and you

have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and you heard the preaching of the gospel, that the Scriptures say that men outside of Christ are lost and that Christ has offered a sacrifice, offering forgiveness of sins through faith in him, may God move you to come to him, acknowledging your sin and receiving as a free gift, the salvation, the Lord Jesus freely offers. May God stir you to come. Do not neglect, for how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Let us stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father we are grateful to Thee for the blessings of life. And O Father, deliver us from spiritual neglect. Enable us to have first things first and second things second for the sake of our families, our loved ones, our friends and, most of all for the Glory of our great God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Go with us now.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.