

"The Chastening of God"

Hebrews 12:5-24

Part 9

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to our study of the book of Hebrews we are again stepping back into a section where the writer has in mind 2 points:

1. **He is encouraging his readers to run and to finish the race.**

Notice Hebrews 12:1

2. **He wants his readers to understand that God's chastening/training is for their good.**

Notice Hebrews 12:11

The writer of Hebrews also has a concern in mind that some of the Hebrew believers who had grown weary and discouraged would give up and in so doing they would turn others away who were not saved yet but were looking to step away from Judaism and moving toward the cross.

Notice Hebrews 12:12-14

Last week in our study we looked at verse 15 and in this verse the writer listed 2 dangers which his readers were to guard against.

Notice Hebrews 12:15

1. **They were to watch closely to be sure no one would "fail of the grace of God".**

The word "failed" means, "***To be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal, to fall short of the end***". The writer of Hebrews was very concerned that some of the Hebrews may not finish the *COURSE* which God had given them to run and so they would miss out on rewards. God had given to them the grace to run the race and that grace was inexhaustible and sufficient.

2. **They were to guard against any bitterness within their lives as they faced the persecution.**

If a root of bitterness was permitted to develop in them it would defile many others.

This now brings us to where we are tonight in our study.

I. **The Application**

Part 4

A. **The Danger**

The writer is now going to point back to the Old Testament and as he does he will point to Esau, a man whom the Hebrews would have been very familiar with.

Notice Hebrews 12:15-16

Now here in verse 16 the writer refers to Esau in 2 negative ways.

1. A fornicator.
2. A profane person.

Before we look at these 2 descriptions we need to first of all look at the passage which the writer of Hebrews is referring to. We shall step onto the scene in Genesis 25 as Moses describes the character of both Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:27-34.

Genesis 25:27

²⁷ And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

Here in this verse we can see the difference between the two men. Jacob was content to dwell in tents. This information about Jacob is so important. This tells us that he was not ROOTED into the world. He lived in a way that he was ready to go when God called. Jacob was NOT entangled in the affairs of this life. The word "plain" means "perfect" it is the same word used to describe Job.

On the other hand there was Esau. He was a cunning hunter, a man of the field. The field in the Bible almost always speaks of the world and so Esau was a man of the world. The fact that he was a hunter tells us he was always searching. The word "cunning" means "to learn". The point here is that Esau spent all his time in the field and he knew all about the animals which he hunted. Esau was a "tough, rugged outdoorsman" whose focus was on the world.

Genesis 25:28

²⁸ And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Here we see that in the family of Isaac there was favoritism. Isaac loved Esau and Rebekah loved Jacob. There is something here that does not pertain to our lesson tonight but I need to just point it out because it will show up again tonight. Jacob and Esau are types of the 2 natures in the believer. Jacob represents the Divine Nature which we receive when God gives us the Holy Spirit. Esau represents the old sin nature which longs to live for this world. Isaac represents a believer who favors the old sin nature and we shall see the results of this as we move on.

Genesis 25:29-30

²⁹ *And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:*

³⁰ *And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.*

Now the Spirit of God points us to a particular day in the lives of these men. Esau had been in the field hunting and Jacob was at home filling his belly with food. When Esau returned he was faint and hungry because he had not been successful in the hunt. Esau's life here gives us a glimpse of what takes place in the life of a person who is not saved and they live for the world. They will always find themselves empty and hungry. No matter what they grasp onto in the world it is all "VANITY AND VEXATION OF SPIRIT" according to Solomon.

Now in the next verse we see that Jacob sees an opportunity.

Genesis 25:31

³¹ *And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.*

Jacob desires to possess the birthright which belonged to Esau since he was the first born of Isaac. Now the birthright carried with it 2 great blessings:

1. The eldest son would receive a double portion of the divided inheritance.
2. He would be spiritual leader of the family. He would serve as the family priest and he would, in the case of this family, carry on the line of the Promised Redeemer.

Jacob was a man who longed for these blessings. He grew up listening to the Promises of God as told to him by his father and mother. He had heard of the miraculous birth of his father Isaac and his heart longed to serve God and to be used of God. But then there was Esau.

Genesis 25:32-34

³² *And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?*

³³ *And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.*

³⁴ *Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.*

Esau could see no value in the birthright except for the double portion of his father's inheritance therefore he sold it to Esau for a temporary satisfaction. Esau was a man who lived for the satisfaction of the flesh. He had no hunger and no longing for the things of God. He did not have a concern for the spiritual condition of his family nor did he give thought to God's Promise of the coming Redeemer.

Let us get back to Hebrews again.

Notice Hebrews 12:16 again.

Now let us consider the 2 negatives used to describe Esau.

1. **He was a fornicator.**

When we think of someone who is guilty of fornication today we think of it as being sexually immoral. There is no hint of that in the account of Esau's selling of his birthright so the question is, "What is the writer referring to here?" In Genesis 25 Esau is not guilty of fornication in the physical sense but he is guilty of spiritual fornication. Esau was the first born of Isaac and he was the possessor of the birthright. He was to be the spiritual leader of the family. Instead of pursuing spiritual blessings he chose a life of idolatry. Let me show you the definition of fornication.

"a man who prostitutes his body to another's lust for hire."

The root word from which ***"fornication"*** comes from means ***"to sell"***. We are NOT told that Esau was guilty of physical fornication but we know for sure that he was sold out to the world and he was a slave of the world. Therefore he was guilty of spiritual fornication.

2. **He was profane.**

The word "profane" means "to disregard that which is to be kept sacred and holy". This is a reference to how Esau placed absolutely no value on the spiritual blessings of God. Esau was guilty of trodden underfoot the spiritual blessings of God. I am reminded of what the writer of Hebrews recorded in chapter 10.

Hebrews 10:26-29

²⁶ *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,*

²⁷ *But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

²⁸ *He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:*

²⁹ **Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?**

Esau was guilty of trodden underfoot the Son of God for he was guilty of rejecting the Promise of the Redeemer.

Notice Hebrews 12:17

The day came when Isaac would pronounce a blessing Esau.

Genesis 27:1-4

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I.

² *And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:*

³ *Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison;*

⁴ *And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.*

Remember earlier I told you he was a picture of the believer who favored the sin nature? Here are the results. His eyes were DIM and he was attempting to work against the will of God for God made it known that the Jacob would receive the blessing.

Rebekah convinced Jacob to deceive his father to receive the blessing and he did just that. Rebekah and Jacob should have allowed God to work in the mind of Isaac but they both lacked faith at this time so they took matters into their own hands. Now let me jump us ahead to the point where Esau finds out what he lost.

Genesis 27:34-38

³⁴ *And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.*

³⁵ *And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.*

³⁶ *And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?*

³⁷ *And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?*

³⁸ *And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.*

Notice Hebrews 12:17 again.

There was no reversing the decisions which Esau had made. He sought the BLESSING with tears but there was no place for repentance because the opportunity had been lost.

Now let me bring this into the life of the Hebrews and then into our lives.

The Hebrews who had received this letter needed to place high value upon spiritual blessings. Esau's heart was broken because he chose to live for the comforts of the world and of this life. The Hebrews were facing very difficult persecution but if they chose to take the easy way out there would come a day when they would stand before their Father and their hearts would also be broken because they did not finish the course which God had appointed to them. They would realize they had allowed the blessings to escape. They needed to turn from the world. They were to be sold out to Jesus Christ and not world. They were to guard against spiritual fornication. They were to hold in highest esteem that which had spiritual value.

Then there were those who were not saved and they needed to understand that what God was offering far outweighed what the world had to offer. They needed to understand that the choices which were made final in this life are NOT reversible in the next life and if they chose the world over Jesus Christ they would forever regret their decision. Sure, leaving Judaism was costly but the cost of leaving Judaism could not compare with the cost of trading Christ for the world.

The very same application can be to all who hear today. There will be a day when we stand before our Heavenly Father and He will hand out rewards. On that day the choices which we made in this life will have much to do with the rewards which we will receive. If we were to place little value on the spiritual things of God we too will be heart broken.

Conclusion:

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Hebrews Study #122

Let me leave you with the words of F. B. Meyer.

"The Greeks represented Opportunity as bald, with no lock of hair by which she could be laid hold of as she turned away and fled. Every one has opportunity, but there is often no symptom of its approach, no sign of its departure; when once it is missed, it rarely comes again! It is said that Queen Victoria once gave a comparatively unknown painter the opportunity of a private sitting. She came at the exact time that was arranged, but he was five minutes late, and he lost his opportunity!

Esau bartered his birthright! What cared he for the spiritual prerogative of the first-born to act as the priest of the clan, and to stand in the possible lineal descent of the Messiah. He craved what would satisfy and please his senses. But when he had sold his birthright, he was held to the transaction. "He found no place of repentance" does not mean that he wished to and could not, but that the die was cast, the decision was deemed final. It is within the range of every one to do an act, to make a choice, to barter away the spiritual for the material so absolutely, that the decision is held irrevocable. Let us take care lest we be betrayed by passion into an act which may affect our entire destiny."