

Sermon

The Place for Repentance

Hebrews 12: 16- 24

August 7, 2016

Scripture Quoted from New American Standard Bible

Note: account (Gen. 27:30-41) of Esau discovering Isaac's blessing begins on page 9.

Where is the place for Repentance in You? Be thinking about this question as you prayerfully read and study.

Today, we continue our study in the life of Esau. Last week, we read where he sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. This week we focus on the blessing Isaac was to give Esau. However, through the trickery of Rebekah and Jacob, Isaac blessed Jacob and not Esau. How could God's people act in such a way? Fraud, deception, and a shell game are the tools of their lives. This event took place before Moses received the Ten Commandments, which included "Thou shall not bear false witness (lie) or steal." Perhaps this is evidence God needed to lay down some laws down. There are about four-hundred years between the life spans of Esau and Moses.

There are many challenges that we are made aware of in these accounts in the lives of Isaac, Esau and Jacob. We will focus upon God calling us to be a godly person, and therefore possess the ability to have a place for repentance in our heart. God calls us to repent. This is the message we hear from John the Baptist in Matthew 3.

Matthew 3:1-3

*1 Now in those days **John the Baptist** came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,*

*² "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"*

³ *For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'" (Is.40:3)*

In preparation for the Christian, life we are told to repent. From the first book in the New Testament to the last, "repent/repentance" is called for.

Matt. 4:17; Matt. 11:20; Mk. 1:15; Mk. 6:12; Lk. 13:3, 5; Lk. 16:30; Lk. 17:4; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Acts 17:30; Acts 26:20; Rev. 2:5, 16, 21-22; Rev. 3:3, 19; Rev. 9:20-21; Rev. 16:9, 11

Jesus stated this in the beginning of his earthly ministry before He called the disciples.

Matthew 4:17

¹⁷ *From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

We begin today in Hebrews 12:16.

Hebrews 12:16-17 NAS

¹⁶ that *there be* no immoral or **godless person** like **Esau**, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal.

¹⁷ For you know that even afterwards, when **he desired** to inherit the **blessing**, he was **rejected**, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

This verse can be challenging for many, because Esau appears to be seeking repentance. Isn't this what God wants us to do? Many people seek repentance, but do not find it. Repentance is not the first process of salvation. Being reborn (John 3), or in other words receiving a new heart, is the first element of salvation. How does God accomplish this? God accomplishes this in a person who has surrendered to Him and then allows Him to work in them.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 ²⁶ *"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

²⁷ *"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.*

Matthew 12:34 ³⁴ *"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that **which fills the heart.***

Esau complained his brother, Jacob, stole his birthright. This reflected the condition of his heart. His heart had not surrendered to God and, therefore, that which he spoke out from his heart, was not from God.

Stephen says in Acts 7:51 to his persecutors . . .

*"You men who are stiff-necked and **uncircumcised in heart** and ears are always **resisting the Holy Spirit**; you are doing just as your fathers did."*

Where does Stephen quote this from? It comes from:

Deut 10:16 *"Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more."*
(Deut 30:6)

Paul writes in Romans 2:29:

²⁹ *But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.*

Paul further explains:

Romans 10:9-10

⁹ *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved;*

¹⁰ *for with the **heart a person believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

Repentance: μετανοίας noun genitive feminine singular common from **μετάνοια**

From the root Greek word **μετάνοια**

μετάνοια, ας, ἡ *remorse, repentance, turning about*, lit. '**change of mind**'

Mt 3:8, 11; Mk 1:4; Lk 15:7; Ac 5:31; 20:21; 26:20; 2 Cor 7:9f; Heb 6:1; 12:17. [pg 126]

When we look closely at the circumstances and spiritual condition of Esau, through his actions and statements, we see a common human failing. This failing is often stated as a person is sorry for the fact they got caught, but not for what they did. They are also sorry and feel victimized by the results of their own failings, their own sin. In their self-imposed victimization, they tend to draw others to feel sorry for them. In addition, they somehow blame others for their condition or for not assisting them in the proper way or not agreeing that they are just a victim. Esau is a classic case. Esau was challenged by Jacob when Jacob offered him a bowl of stew for his birthright. Esau was not tricked into the agreement.

Esau did not wait for the Lord to act and provide for him as God had intervened at the sacrifice of Isaac. For sure, Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac, and the Lord substituted a ram for Isaac. This is Esau's father and grandfather and a foundational account in the life of the Hebrew people as it relates their relationship with God. Esau knew that God intervenes, but Esau did not call out to the Lord in his time of hunger. Instead, when offered a simple proposition, he traded in his birthright and did not turn to the Lord.

Moving forward in time to the event of the "Blessing" of Jacob, we find that it is Jacob who is the deceiver at the instruction and insistence of his mother Rebekah (Gen. 27). Before his death, Isaac seeks out Esau to bless him. However, as many of us are familiar with the account, Jacob wears hairy animal hide to mimic Esau to his blind father, Isaac, who blesses him thinking it is Esau. Once Isaac is aware of the trickery, he states that he only has a blessing for one son (intended to be an oldest son's blessing) and that blessing was conveyed to Jacob. Esau is upset and laments.

Gen. 27:34 **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!"**

³⁶ 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 a blessing for me?"

Esau blames Jacob for taking away his birthright, when the facts are that Esau willingly gave them up. Again, Esau did not turn to the Lord in his hunger, but gave, by choice. Esau chose to place his **temporal interest and solution** to his hunger upon himself and not the Lord. When it came to the time of the blessing, Esau had not repented. He had no display of a change of heart or mind concerning losing his birthright. He still blamed Jacob.

Hence, Esau laments, "**He took away my birthright**" (**Gen. 27:36**). His attitude had not changed, nor had he accepted the responsibility for trading in his birthright. Again, he blamed Jacob. In the generation in which I grew up, many of us remember a comedian named Flip Wilson who performed a comic act with the lines, "**The Devil made me do it.**" For years afterward, many sermons and the airways of social communication repeated these words as a joke. However, behind many comic relief jokes there lies

a truth. The joke was remembered, because, in fact, many people live this way. Esau did. “**Jacob made me do it.**” Esau made this statement to Isaac when he blamed Jacob for taking away his birthright, when in fact he chose to give it away instead of turning to God. This is why there wasn't a blessing for him from Isaac even though he sought one. Many people today seek a blessing from God; however, they have so much un-confessed sin in their life that they are not eligible to receive a blessing from God. Their life does not change. We can see this in the life of Esau.

Hebrews 12:17 declares Esau found no place for repentance. **Where is a place for repentance? In your heart!** Hebrews 12:16 says that Esau was a godless person. Obviously, if a person is godless, there is no presence of God in their heart; and therefore, no place for repentance, no changing of their mind.

In the New Testament, an often referred to text is in Acts 2:36 and following. The people hear Peter's sermon that they are responsible for the death of Jesus the Messiah. Scriptures tells us that their hearts are **orn**, and they called out to Peter, “**What must we do?**” Peter tells them first to “**repent.**” Repenting is the turning away from a previous condition. It is the internal change of mind of a person that reflects their heart's changed spiritual condition. This takes place because a person's heart is Holy Spirit convicted, and the person surrenders to their Holy Spirit conviction. What does the Lord ask us to do, to illustrate this internal heart-change and the

turning of the mind in the course of our lives? He asked us to be water baptized, which is the act that symbolizes our change of heart leading to our change of mind, thus our salvation. [Note: Water baptism is not the same as baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ must reside in us or we are not His (Romans 8:9). People in the New Testament such as at Cornelius' house in Acts 10:46, 47 speak in tongues before they are water baptized. This is a topic for a later lesson.] Therefore, there was repentance for those in Acts 2, because they experienced surrendering their hearts (Christ's Spirit comes into you at this time; a rebirth (John 3)) that then placed them in a spiritual condition to turn (repent with their minds) from their sinful lives. The indwelling Holy Spirit gave them the power to turn. This is the Lord's victory in us over sin. They then were eligible to witness their changed condition in water baptism. Esau could find no place for repentance, because, unlike those in Acts, his heart was not torn (surrendered). God was not in him even though he knew about God. Again, he continued to blame someone else for his sin. This is why; in the book of Hebrews, Esau is called a godless person.

It is true, there was only one oldest-son-blessing to be given by Isaac, and he gave it unintentionally to Jacob. This left Esau out of the equation. We may wonder; why did Isaac not give some kind of blessing to Esau? Looking back in history at two brothers, the

sons of Abraham, being Ishmael and Isaac, who were in covenant competition, were both blessed. Isaac, being the younger, received the covenant blessing. However, Ishmael still received a blessing (Genesis 17:20). To that point in Ishmael's life, we do not read of him being a godless person. Instead of Esau receiving a blessing, Isaac pronounces what appears to be a curse (Gen 27:39-40). According to Scripture, Esau then perused to kill Jacob once his father died. To some extent, Esau is correct in thinking that Jacob underhandedly received his father's blessing (Gen. 27.41), and this is why he sought the life of his brother. However, his real problem is more accurately reflected from his own sin in selling his birthright for a bowl of stew. Remember, like Ishmael, Esau could have received a blessing, but, He does not, because his heart was not right. He was a godless person.

The account of Isaac's Blessing:

Genesis 27:30-41 NAS

³⁰ 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.

³¹ 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."

³² And Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?"
And he said, "I am your son, your first-born, Esau."

³³ Then Isaac trembled violently, and 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."

³⁴ 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!"

³⁵ And he said,
"Your brother came deceitfully,
and has taken away your blessing."

³⁶ 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 a blessing for me?"

³⁷ 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?"

³⁸ And Esau said to his father,

"Do you have only one blessing, my father?

Bless me, *even* me also, O my father."

So Esau lifted his voice and wept.

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.

⁴⁰ "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."

⁴¹ 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."

Continuing of Hebrews 12

¹⁸ For you have **not** come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,

¹⁹ and to the **blast of a trumpet** and the **sound of words** which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that **no further word should be spoken to them.**

²⁰ For they could not bear the command, "**If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.**"

²¹ And so terrible was the sight, *that* **Moses** said, "I am full of fear and trembling."

²² **But you have come to Mount Zion** and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

²³ to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven,

and to **God**, the Judge of all,
and to the spirits of **righteous men made perfect**,
²⁴ and to **Jesus**,
the mediator of a new covenant,
and to the sprinkled blood,
which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.