

• A family in trouble

Esau ruined his life by delayed interest in the rewards of God

• A profane man

• An irreversible loss

• A warning to the Christian against carelessness

• Too late!

• Jacob's trickery but Esau's responsibility

• Forgiveness and salvation but loss of inheritance

Isaac was unwilling to follow God's prediction concerning Jacob. Rebekah was manipulating her husband. Esau was ruining his life. Jacob was full of deceitful and tricky ways. Now the family fell into collective hatred, bitterness, remorse and mutual accusation.

Esau ruined his life by delayed interest in the rewards of God. Soon after Isaac had been deceived, Esau came in from his hunting trip ^{¶1}. He spent some time preparing tasty food for Isaac and then, after Isaac had already given an unchangeable inheritance to Jacob, he came to Isaac. 'Sit up and have this nice meal I have prepared for you,' he says ^{¶2}, 'and then you will be able to give me your blessing' ^{¶3}. Isaac is shattered ^{¶4}! If this is Esau, who has he just given the blessing to? Deceitful Jacob! And it irreversible. 'Indeed he will be blessed!' ^{¶5}.

Esau cared nothing for the things of God. He had lived for his hunting and his belly. He had been a profane man, living life without reference to God.

Now he wants the blessing but he has lost it. It had been possible before to get the inheritance but now it was no longer possible. What made the loss irreversible was an oath. The New Testament says 'See that no one is sexually immoral or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears' ^{¶1}.

In the New Testament we have warnings against losing God's blessing. How shall we – as Christians – escape if we neglect the salvation we have and make no use of it? ^{¶1}. If we fall by the wayside an oath will be taken against us and we shall then not be able to get back to where we were before ^{¶2}. If God ever swears against us in anger an inheritance will be lost. Esau is a warning against the Christian who loses his reward because of carelessness.

The Christian might want the blessing that he was once careless about. Esau said 'Bless me, me as well as him, my father!' ^{¶1}. He had once been careless but now he wants the inheritance. But it is too late.

From one angle it was Jacob who, through Esau's carelessness, has tricked him. Yet Esau had to be responsible for his own life ^{¶1}. An oath has been taken; nothing can be done to reverse it ^{¶2}.

Esau weeps with distress ^{¶1}. There comes a time when repentance is too late to bring about a change in the situation. Esau is repentant. He truly does now want this blessing and everything that is involved in it. But it is too late to bring a change in his father because a death-bed oath has been taken, and that cannot be changed. A Christian who loses his inheritance may be repentant. His repentance will restore his relationship to God but it will be too late to get back what has been lost. The Israelites who refused to go into Canaan wept when they heard that God would withhold the promised land from them. They mourned bitterly and confessed their sin ^{¶2}. And God really did forgive them ^{¶3}. Yet they lost something that they could not get back. When they said 'We shall go up to the place Yahweh promised' ^{¶4}, Moses said that it was too late. 'You will be defeated' ^{¶5}. Their distress could not bring back the lost opportunity. Their being forgiven secured their salvation; but the oath of God prevented them from getting back the reward they could have gotten for themselves.

¶1 27:30

¶2 27:31

¶3 27:31

¶4 27:32–33

¶5 27:33

¶1 Hebrews 12:17, NIV

¶1 see Hebrews 2:3
¶2 see Hebrews 6:2–8

¶1 27:34

¶1 27:35

¶2 27:36–37

¶1 27:38

¶2 Numbers 14:40

¶3 Numbers 14:20

¶4 Numbers 14:40

¶5 Numbers 14:42

- Freedom from subservience a long way off

Jacob's deceit brought him exile and suffering

- Sent away to his uncle Laban

- 20 years

In the midst of failure God had mercy

The pattern is the same with Esau. His father loved him still. He still got a word of prophecy from his father. But it was not much of a blessing. He and his people the Edomites would be subservient to Jacob. Only in the long-distance future would the people of Esau, the Edomites, throw off the yoke of Israelite dominance ^{¶1}.

Jacob's deceit brought him exile and suffering. Because of the way in which Jacob had twice deceived him it is not surprising that Esau is exceedingly resentful about Jacob. He discovers Jacob has tricked him again ^{¶1} and says 'Is he not rightly named Jacob – Grabber, Trickster?' and from that point onwards he hates Jacob ^{¶2}. The animosity continues for a long time. 'Esau hated Jacob...' Soon he was saying to himself 'I will kill my brother Jacob' ^{¶3}. Rebekah advises Jacob to run away ^{¶4}. She thought it would not be long ('Stay with him a few days,' she says, 27:44). She fears she will lose both her sons ^{¶5}. Poor Rebekah! Her life with Esau's Hittite wives is distressing her ^{¶6}. She has another reason for sending Jacob to her brother Laban; she fears Jacob might follow Esau's example and marry a Hittite.

Jacob stayed with Laban for twenty years or so. Isaac agreed with the plan to send him away, and released him with words of good will ^{¶1}. Esau clumsily tried to mend relationships with his parents by marrying a cousin who was not a Hittite ^{¶2}. Eventually Esau got over his hatred of Jacob and was nice to him when they met twenty years later.

In the midst of failure God had mercy. When Jacob was sent away something happened to him on the journey. Jacob's deceit brought him exile and suffering, but as he is travelling God intervenes in his life in great kindness and graciousness. He reaches a certain place at nightfall and goes to sleep using a stone as a pillow. As he sleeps he is given a dream. It is a vision of God, and of God's mercy. The angels are coming down to meet him. God is still like this. When we have brought disaster upon ourselves by our foolish ways God is likely to have mercy.

^{¶1} 27:39–40

^{¶1} 27:35

^{¶2} 27:36

^{¶3} 27:41

^{¶4} 27:42–43

^{¶5} 27:45

^{¶6} 27:46

^{¶1} 28:1–5

^{¶2} 28:6–9



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