

Genesis 27: 30-41 and 28: 1-5; “The Blessings of Jacob & Esau”, Sermon # 81 in the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 10th, 2006, in the Morning Worship Service.

We have seen that the Patriarchal blessing of Isaac was “the blessing of his soul” upon his son. This meant that once the blessing had been bestowed that it was irrevocable. This was not because Isaac might not want to change what he had done and said in giving the blessing to Jacob. But it was because God who was behind Isaac, conveying the blessing, would not change His mind about it. It could not be withdrawn or revised or taken back. Isaac knew this when Esau came in and tried to obtain his blessing after Jacob had gotten there first and stolen it. Isaac trembled exceedingly, our text says, “and said – “Who?” “Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me?” “I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him – and indeed he shall be blessed.”

Esau in anguish cries out in verse 34 with an exceeding great and bitter cry – “Bless me – me also, O my father!” And he says to his father in verse 38 – “Have you only one blessing, my father?” “And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.” But as I read these verses to you, I am sure that you noticed that Isaac did have another blessing to give to Esau. It was not the same blessing that he gave to Isaac, but it is a blessing, even so. The blessings that Isaac bestowed upon Jacob and Esau were no ordinary blessings of a father to a son, but prophetic blessings bestowed upon each.

They conveyed all the most important future blessings of God upon the life of the son being blessed. And they give us an indication of the differences between God’s blessings to the elect and the non-elect; to those whom God has chosen to eternal life, and those who have not been chosen. “The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable”, it says in Romans 10: 28. Jacob who did not deserve the blessing because of his sin of deceiving his father, will receive the blessing because He is the chosen of God. Esau will find, in the final analysis, that there is only one kind of blessing that will do a person good for all of eternity.

O how great are the wisdom, and the grace, and the mercy of God to undeserving sinners, as we all are. It is an amazing thing that He would save any of us! The question that I would like to put before you this morning is this – What are the differences between God’s blessings upon Jacob and Esau that show us the differences between God’s blessings to the elect and the non-Elect? I believe that the difference can clearly be seen in the following 3 ways.

1st of all – There were earthly blessings that would come to each man, but only in Jacob’s case was the Lord’s blessing mentioned in connection with it.

You will notice if you compare the blessing of Isaac to Jacob in chapter 27, verse 28, with that given to Esau in chapter 27, verse 39, that to each man it was said that they would be given “the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth.” Esau’s blessing reads in the reverse. “Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above.” Jacob’s blessing has a preface to it. “Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed.” “Therefore, may God give you the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine.”

These are all earthly blessings spoken of in a prophetic way. But there are real differences between Jacob's and Esau's blessing. They both speak of the earthly prosperity which would come to each man but one has vastly more in it. What is the difference? It is that God's name and His abundant Providential care are mentioned in Jacob's blessing, but nothing of God is mentioned in the blessing to Esau. It is true that “God opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing”, as it says in Psalm 145: 16.

But there is something substantially more that is given to those who “praise God from whom all blessings flow”. It is Himself in all those blessings. Esau does not understand this truth and would scoff at it. With Esau it is all about his earthly dwelling. “Your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth.” It reads like a person who has built his own house and is proud of his own works. And I am sure that it was so in Esau’s case. He did not care at all about God blessing his works. He did not think that having God's blessing upon them mattered at all. He believed in the

principle of diligence in his works, but he did not consider his work as being in the sight of God. He worked to get what he wanted out of life. He no doubt looked down upon, and thought himself superior to, those who were not as diligent and hard working as he was.

God would bless Esau in the works of his hands, but Esau would not give thanks to God or worship God. He would despise and neglect Him in that way. Esau would also receive the “dew of heaven from above”. And this would be of great benefit to his fields, his feeding and watering his cattle, and raising his crops, if he did any of that. But he would never seek for God’s blessing of rain and dew, although he might curse and complain when it did not come. The unbelieving man does not recognize or understand that it is God that gives the greatest of blessings. He does not realize that God is working in and through all of these blessings, so that he might be thankful. God would have His goodness and kindness lead them to repentance.

There was in Isaac’s mind a distinctive good smell to a field which the Lord had blessed. Isaac loved this smell because he knew that God had brought blessing to the field. It did not just happen by chance! It was something that God had bestowed and given. In Deuteronomy 33: 13 it says in the blessing of Jacob to Joseph – “Blessed of the Lord is his land, with the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and the deep lying beneath, with the precious fruits of the sun, with the precious produce of the months, with the best things of the ancient mountains, with the precious things of the everlasting hills, with the precious things of the earth and its fullness, and the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.” “Let the blessing come on the head of Joseph, and the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.”

You see, God does bless in a much greater sense, the believer, the one who is separated unto Him, even in earthly blessings. Because, the believer perceives and receives much more through whatever earthly blessings are bestowed upon him, even if he is poorer in material wealth and goods than the unbeliever. The blessing of the dew should be understood by believers as the benefits of the instruction of grace to their souls as well as the benefits of blessing to him in earthly things.

Deuteronomy 32: 2 says – “Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the raindrops on the tender herb, and as the showers on the grass.” “For I proclaim the name of the Lord: Ascribe greatness to our God.” This is why we should not covet whatever blessings that the Lord may bestow upon unbelievers, even if it be great earthly riches; because it is the “blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it”. (Proverbs 10: 22)

2nd – Jacob received the blessing of national dominion, while Esau and his descendants would live by the sword.

Verse 29 of chapter 27 says of Jacob – “Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you.” “Be master over your brethren and let your mother's sons bow down to you.” Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!” In verse 40 it says of Esau – “By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck.” These are once again earthly blessings given to these men and to their posterity. They are great and mighty national earthly blessings which are given to Jacob. They show the undeserved favor and mercy of God on Jacob, who would become Israel as a nation. They are blessings of strength and skill in battle, and in the use of the sword and the use of one's own strength and wisdom which are given to Esau who would become Edom as a nation.

They must have had many mighty military men among them if there were so many chiefs. There are about 30 of them listed. Esau wants independence from Jacob, not servitude, and so he takes off for Mount Seir to live a far different kind of life from what Jacob would live as a stranger in the land, dwelling in tents and raising sheep. Esau would maintain his earthly freedom and independence if he can, by the sword. He will succeed some and fail some. Esau wanted to be free and independent, but even when he obtained what he sought, he was not satisfied. And this is the way that it is when you have earthly blessings only, and not the blessings of eternal life. You are always yearning for something more that you think you must have to be satisfied.

You are often thinking that the true religion of following God according to the Scriptures is limiting and confining, and a yoke which you cannot bear. You think that you have to be free from that yoke and you will take definite steps to break the yoke from your neck, because you think that there must be something more and something better. You long to be free, but you do not see that real freedom comes in being a servant of God, living by faith in Jesus Christ, and keeping His commandments. Instead you come to believe that any freedom and independence that you do have is something which must be defended or established by your wisdom or your own might.

But this is not true in the sight of God. It is true that a nation must seek to have a strong military to defend itself from its enemies. But it is not true that this means that true freedom is being maintained. Freedom is maintained when we have good relations with God, when we have taken Him to be our God, and when we live according to His laws and rest upon His promises. Turn with me to Psalm 33: 11 and 12. It says here – “The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.” “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.” “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.”

Esau will live by his sword, but Jacob and all the people of God will trust in the Lord. Listen to Psalm 44. “We have heard with our ears, O God, Our fathers have told us, the deeds You did in their days, in days of old: You drove out the nations with Your hand, but them You planted; You afflicted the peoples and cast them out.” “For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was Your right hand, Your arm, and light of Your countenance because You favored them.” “You are my King, O God; command victories for Jacob.” “Through You we will push down our enemies; through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us.” “For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me.” “But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who hated us.” “In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever.”

This is what the New Testament people of God do as well, even though there is no longer a Theocratic nation of Israel. It is Jesus Christ, who as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords has won the victory for His Church. And we pray that He would command victories for us in our battle against sin and the schemes of the devil. It is He who we pray would command that His gospel would conquer all the false religions of the world; especially those who would advance their cause by the sword.

The power and dominion over all the kingdoms of the world belongs to Jesus Christ, and this should be remembered by us this morning and declared by us to others who may not understand. Jesus Christ is the prince of peace. He will have the dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth, and those who live by the sword shall never prevail in the final analysis. They may prevail for a short time and their schemes of independence from the truth of the revealed religion of the Bible may continue even for generations and centuries. They may live the lie of a false religion for centuries. But in the end they will fall, they will not prevail. And it will not be because of the strength of the Christian Church.

The Church will reign someday upon the earth. But it will not be because she was strong in herself. It will be because the Lord of Hosts has been with us. It will be because the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Let us hold fast this truth forever; for all generations until the Lord's return, and not give up this hope of the gospel conquering the nations no matter how dark the political scene may become in the world. The Lord Jesus Christ has and shall win all the battles that must be won. Isaiah 63 says so. “Who is this who comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength.” “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” “Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?”

This is the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is mighty to save. He is mighty to judge. “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me.” For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and

I have stained all My robes.” You see, either you will believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the promise of the gospel and be saved; or you will live an independent restless life, like Esau, seeking to be free from what you mistakenly think is the bondage of being a Christian, which is really the greatest freedom possible. Let’s now conclude by looking briefly at the final difference between Jacob and Esau's blessings.

3rd – It is the difference between the supposed blessing of free will versus having the real blessing of coming to repentance over your sins.

Verse 41 it says – “So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” We can see here from this verse that Esau was man who never really learned repentance. We have seen him cry with an exceedingly great and bitter cry in verse 34 – “Bless me – me also, O my father!” And he is there seeking for the blessing with tears, but his tears are from self-pity and not a true sorrow over his sin. There was only sorrow that he has not been able to obtain the earthly things that he wanted.

If his repentance was true he would have cried out – O what a wretched man I am! I have sinned such great sins against the Lord! I have not considered what He wanted me to do, or how He wanted me to live, to be of any importance.

He would have said – O that He might forgive me of my great wickedness, and grant me repentance! If it means that Jacob receives the birthright and the blessing, I will still be able to say – I came to know God, from whom all blessings flow. And having Him, I have all I need. But we hear none of this. We hear of his hatred of Jacob and his intention to kill him after his father dies. And so we find Esau to be a man doomed to live the life of a reprobate, one rejected by God. His cry in hell will be similar to the cry that came from his lips on this day when he realized that he had lost the blessing. He will cry out the question once again – Have you only one blessing my father?"

And the answer from the Father in heaven will be to his stricken mind and conscience will be, "There is only one blessing that makes any difference in the eternal sense. It is the blessing of having Jesus Christ my Son to be your Savior and Lord. But you rejected this when you sold your birthright. You sold it for one morsel of food. Esau did receive earthly blessings which were many and great in an earthly sense. But he did not receive the greatest of blessings, which Jacob did. In Chapter 28, verse 3, Isaac says to Jacob – May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.

Isaac now realized that he had been wrong to try to give to Esau that which God had all along intended to give to Jacob. Certainly Jacob did not deserve this, the greatest of blessings, the blessing of the promise of eternal life. And he had not yet entered into that personal relationship with God through the conversion of his soul. His heart was desperately wicked and he did not know it well. But he will come to see his terrible sins and mistakes later on when he is under Laban’s authority, and still further on in his life when his own sons will lie to him about Joseph and tell him that he has been killed by a wild beast.

But God will be faithful to His purpose and to his promises to Jacob. He will save him from his sins, and give him the promise of Abraham which was the promise of the Messiah, and all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. This will be the real difference between God’s blessings to Jacob and Esau. We shall see the beginning of these good things in Jacob's life in next week's sermon.