



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 40



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GSNT=Goodspeed (1923), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862)

----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = Barclay-Newman, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

JACOB, ESAU, AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

Gen 25:28 "And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. 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. ³¹ And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. 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 sware 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." (Genesis 25:28-34)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

The entire lives, until manhood, of Jacob and Esau are summed up in a few words: *"the boys grew," "Esau was a cunning hunter," and "Jacob was a plain man."* There is no record of childhood experiences, as there was with Ishmael and Isaac. Now we will find that Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob. The Spirit then reveals a single event during which the inheritance passed from Esau to Jacob. This is not the way men would deliver the records of Jacob and Esau. **However, the Lord's revelations are**

details of His eternal purpose. They accent what He is doing, as compared to what men are doing. We must not allow ourselves to be diverted into a carnal assessment of what is reported. This is a report that will shed light on how God will bring the Messiah into the world, thereby fulfilling His promise to Abraham. **God will not build around what men do or have done, but will rather shape what men do by His will.** It is God who is at work in the earth, and His revelations will make that clear. As we expose our minds to this inspired record, we must see to it that we do

not allow human reasoning to clutter the landscape of understanding.

Even though this passage is the Word of God, and in spite of the fact that men have been warned not to tamper with God's Word (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18-19), men have chosen to view this text in differing ways. **Owing to this passage, some have said things about Jacob that God never said.** They have even assessed the events in this text as Esau did. In doing so, they have conveniently forgotten that God has spoken clearly concerning tampering

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with His Word (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18-19). That includes making assessments of the people with whom He worked, that He has not made.

In dealing with this passage, I will confine myself to what has been revealed. If God has assessed any person as unacceptable, or having a fault, that is how I will view the passage. If God levels no criticism against the persons involved, neither will I. I see no other acceptable manner in which this text can be approached.

GOD HAS ALWAYS DEALT WITH MEN WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE KNOWLEDGE MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM

From the beginning, Divine judgment has been according to the knowledge made available to men.

➔ ADAM AND EVE. The Lord had made the moral boundaries clear to Adam and Eve. *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."*

(Gen 2:16-17)

➔ CAIN. *"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."* (Gen 4:7)

➔ THE WHOLE WORLD OF NOAH'S DAY. Warnings had been issued by Enoch (Jude 1:14-15). Noah had been a *"preacher of righteousness"* (2 Pet 2:5). Although God had clearly revealed His *"eternal power and Godhead"* in the creation, men ignored it, changing the glory of God, and creating God's of their own imagination (Rom 1:20-32).

➔ THE BUILDERS OF SHINAR. There had been a clear witness of Divine protection in Noah and his family. Although this was passed down through the generations, men chose to fictionalize the whole event, and live as though men could not depend upon God (Gen 11:1-6).

➔ ABRAHAM. In all of God's dealings with Abraham, it was according to the knowledge he had received. Thus, when Abraham asked if Eliezer could be the heir, God revealed more to him, telling him his heir would be begotten by himself, and the patriarch never mentioned Eliezer again (Gen 15:2-6). After the episode with Hagar and the birth of Ishmael, God revealed that Sarah would bear the heir – and Abraham

➔

SODOM AND GOMORRAH. The witness of nature contradicted the propensity to sodomy (Rom 1:26-27). Lot also sat in their gate, apprizing them of their iniquity (Gen 19:1,9).

➔ ABIMELECH. God did not deal with Abimelech in an irremediably manner because there were things he did not know. Having been graciously apprized of them, Abimelech did what was right (Gen 20:3-8).

THE RESTRICTING EFFECTS OF A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

During spiritually primitive times, when heavenly revelation was sparse errors in judgment sometime occurred – not as an act of rebellion, but because of spiritual ignorance. One such case is spelled out for us. It involved young Samuel, but a child. When God called to him, the lad thought Eli was calling him, and so promptly reported to Eli, the high priest. His failure to recognize it was the Lord is explained in these words: *"Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him"* (1 Sam 3:7).

Examples of Deficient Knowledge

➔ WILLING IGNORANCE OF ISRAEL: *"For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her*

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immediately adapted to the revelation (Gen 17:15-18:10). This was Abraham's consistent manner: he always adapted to revelation.

silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." (Hosea 2:8)

➔ THE JEWS CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS: *"And*

now, brethren, I wot that **through ignorance** ye did it, as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17)

- ➔ THE JEWS EFFORT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS: "For they **being ignorant of God's righteousness**, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (Rom 10:3).
- ➔ IDOL WORSHIPERS IN ATHENS: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.**" (Acts 17:23)
- ➔ APOLLOS: "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, **knowing only the baptism of John.**" (Acts 18:25)
- ➔ DISCIPLES AT EPHESUS: "He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, **We have not so much as heard whether there be any**

him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. **Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge:** for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled." (1 Cor 8:6-7).

- ➔ SAUL OF TARSUS. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because **I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**" (1 Tim 1:13)

The liability of ignorance is seen in the records of early believers. There were times when they would do things that someone living in the Light of the Sun of Righteousness would never do.

- ➔ Abraham suggesting Eliezer as his heir (Gen 15:2-3).
- ➔ The decision of Sarah and Abraham to attempt to have Abraham's seed through Hagar (Gen 16:1-16).

Both of these were the direct result of **not knowing** the will of the Lord. **This condition was not owing to hardness of heart, but was rather the**

As witnessed in Israel, and others in these latter times, **some ignorance is not innocent.** There are those who are "willingly ignorant" (2 Pet 3:5), in spite of express revelation, and the resounding testimony all around them.

The seriousness of a state of ignorance is measured by the amount of revelation that is **available** to the individual. If God has spoken on a matter, continued ignorance in that area cannot be justified. When a person actually receives "*the love of the truth*" (2 Thess 2:10-11), it is inevitably attended by a fervent quest for the truth itself. Such will gladly do what Solomon urged: "*Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding*" (Prov 23:23). **God will see to it that the paths of such souls, like Apollos, are crossed with that of an Aquila and Priscilla, who will expound "unto him the way of God more perfectly"** (Acts 18:26).

Although I feel a bit uncomfortable saying so, much is not required from those who have not received much. Jesus indicated this when He said, "*But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*" (Luke 12:48).

That being true, there is no way to justify the perpetual ignorance of the things of God in this "*day of salvation.*" Considering how much has been revealed, particularly in the "*apostles' doctrine*" (Act 2:42), continued ignorance is particularly reprehensible. An understanding of this should also relieve men of the tendency to judge those living in relatively dark times as though they had access to an abundance of truth. With the testimony of creation, the Law and writings of Moses, the Psalms, the Prophets, the ministry of John the Baptist, the record God has given of His Son, and the Apostles' doctrine, **there is no justifiable reason for any person to remain in a state of perpetual spiritual ignorance.** Men are responsible for seeking God

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Holy Ghost." (Acts 19:2)

- ➔ CERTAIN IN CORINTH: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for **some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.**" (1 Cor 15:34)
- ➔ WEAKER BRETHREN IN CORINTH: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in

result of a lack of revelation on the matter. The first incident took place while Abraham had received no knowledge that stated his heir would be begotten by himself. The second took place while neither Abraham nor Sarah knew the seed would be conceived and birthed by Sarah. Their disadvantage was not found in their hearts, or in their faith, **but in their knowledge.**

and the knowledge of the truth, and | have been given advantages to do so. |

ISAAC LOVED ESAU

Gen 25:28a ***"And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison . . ."*** Other versions read, *"because he ate of his game,"* ^{NKJV} *"because he had a taste for his game,"* ^{NASB} *"who had a taste for wild game,"* ^{NIV} *"because he was fond of game,"* ^{NRSV} *"because Esau's meat was greatly to his taste,"* ^{BBE} *"because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home,"* ^{NLT} *"Esau would take the meat of wild animals to his father Isaac, and so Isaac loved him more,"* ^{CEV} and *"Isaac loved [and was partial to] Esau, because he ate of Esau's game."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The English word *"venison"* means: "HUNTING, FROM VENARI TO HUNT, PURSUE . . . THE EDIBLE FLESH OF A GAME ANIMAL AND ESPECIALLY A DEER." ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

SOMETHING TO BE SEEN

In assessing this circumstance, I will exercise caution not to speak derogatorily of Isaac, as some have chosen to do. Since God does not chide Isaac, either directly or indirectly, for his preference of Esau, I do not dare to do so. I will show why I have chosen to think in this manner.

It seems to me that here we have a very deliberate overthrow of the notion that God's election is according to prescience, or being aware ahead of time, of what men will do.

The Facts We Have to Work With

The preeminent, or determining, facts in this case are as follows:

- ➔ God declared the elder [Esau] would serve the younger (Jacob) (Gen 25:23). This determination, Paul affirms is thus described, *"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth"* (Rom 9:11). That is, the Divine choice had nothing whatsoever with anything Jacob or Esau – or Rebekah – did.

- ➔ Esau was born first, and Jacob was born second (Gen 25:25).
- ➔ It is revealed by the Prophet Malachi, and confirmed by Paul the apostles, *"Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated"* (Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:134).
- ➔ Isaac loved Esau, indicating that he was preferred (Gen 25:28).
- ➔ Rebekah loved, or preferred, Jacob (Gen 25:28).
- ➔ In our text, Esau willingly sells his birthright to Jacob (Gen 25:28-33).

Now, if God's election is according to prescience, or what He foresees will be done, precisely which

and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom 4:17).

The NRSV reads, *"calls into existence the things that do not exist."* Other versions read, *"calls nonexistent things into existence,"* ^{CJB} *"calls into existence nations that don't even exist,"* ^{GWN} *"calls into being what does not exist,"* ^{NAB} and *"summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do."* ^{NET} **That is, God calls the circumstances forth, causing them to take place contrary to all natural laws, and the works of men as well. What God purposes, He causes to take place, or be fulfilled.**

This has been repeatedly demonstrated throughout the book of Genesis.

That is, God calls the circumstances forth, causing them to take place contrary to all natural laws, and the works of men as well. What God purposes, He causes to take place, or be fulfilled.

of these historic circumstances moved Him to set his love on Jacob, making him the third generation of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)? What view best confirms *"that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth"* (Rom 9:11).

In the Romans text, Paul uses the word *"calleth"* in the same way in which he referred to God's promise of Abraham having seed: *"As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead,*

- ➔ God purposed to create a world, and **made it happen in every detail**, even though no circumstances existed that made it possible (Gen 1).
- ➔ God determined to destroy the earth with a flood, and **made it happen** (Gen 6-8).
- ➔ God determined men would not build a tower and a city, and **caused the building to cease abruptly** (Gen 11).
- ➔ God determined Abraham would have a son through Sarah, who would be his rightful heir – and **made it happen** (Gen 18).

➡ Now, God has determined the elder, Esau, will be ruled by the younger, Jacob – and **He will also make it happen.**

The events now before us are being governed by God Himself. **He is working with circumstances that can in no way add up to what He has determined.** Not only does the sequence in the birth of the children contradict what He has announced, but Isaac himself prefers Esau, while Rebekah, who is subject to him, prefers Jacob.

my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" Samson ignored what they said, responding, *"Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well"* (Judg 14:3).

However, the matter is not left there, for all was not what it appeared to be. Therefore, the Holy Spirit makes an editorial comment concerning this event: *"But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that He sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel"* (Judg 14:4).

➡ **GOD MOVED DAVID TO NUMBER ISRAEL.** *"And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah"* (2 Sam 24:1).

After David had numbered Israel, his *"heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly"* (2 Sam 24:10). This is the occasion when the Lord sent Gad to David saying, *"Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me"* (2 Sam 24:13).

Therefore, what appeared to be a stark violation of the will of God, was actually God Himself working out a purpose that involved oppression of the people who were oppressing His people.

I do not know what form of reasoning will support the thought that what we now read was nothing more than the contrivances of men. I will postulate that this is the way God chose to work the matter out – that He was the One who **caused** these circumstances to take place.

GOD HAS REVEALED THIS IS HIS MANNER OF WORKING

I am pressing this point because there has been too much folklore and human reasoning attached to this passage, and it is time for it to be cast down.

THE CASE OF SAMSON WANTING A PHILISTINE WIFE

On one occasion, Samson *"told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife."* (Judges 14:2). Knowing that this contradicted the express word of the Lord concerning marrying a heathen (Ex 34:16; Deut 7:3), his parents replied, *"Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all*

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THE CASE OF DAVID NUMBERING ISRAEL

The incident of David numbering Israel is one that resulted in 70,000 men dying from Dan to Beersheba. The fact of David's numbering Israel is presented from three different vantage points.

➡ **DAVID HIMSELF MADE THE DETERMINATION.**

"And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it" (1 Chron 21:2; 2 Sam 24:2).

➡ **SATAN PROVOKED DAVID TO NUMBER ISRAEL.**

"And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chron 21:1).

David could not choose, but asked the Lord to make the choice: *"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man. So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men"* (2 Sam 24:14-15).

There you have a severe judgment leveled against Israel. **At the root of the matter was God's wrath, that had been kindled against Israel.** In executing his will, Satan was employed to move David to number Israel. From yet another perspective, David thought of the project himself. **However, at the foundational level, God was fulfilling His own will in the midst of a moral environment involving men and Satan.**

CONCLUSION

Therefore I conclude that the case before us is not a simplistic one that can be approached with religious

naivete. To behold it properly, our thinking must revolve around what God has determined, with a lively awareness of the fact that God involves Himself in all the He has purposed. What is done is under His supervision, whether it is clearly seen or not.

Isaac loving Esau is part of the stage upon which the purpose of God is being worked out. It is a Divine setup to show that God's will prevails, even when it runs counter to all manner of circumstance. If God's choices are actually determined by what He

foresees that men will do, then this whole event will cause an enormous amount of confusion, and no spiritually rational explanation will be possible. The truth will therefore be hidden, as men will be seen as driving God's will.

REBEKAH LOVED JACOB

"^{28b} . . . but Rebekah loved Jacob." Other versions read, "Rebekah had more love for Jacob," ^{BBE} "favored Jacob," ^{CJB} "preferred Jacob," ^{NAB} and "Rebekah's favorite was Jacob." ^{LIVING}

The Believer's Study Bible makes the following comment on this verse. "THE TENDENCY OF ISAAC TO FAVOR ESAU AND THE PREFERENTIAL FEELINGS OF REBEKAH FOR JACOB LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR MUCH SORROW. PARENTAL PARTIALITY IS A TRAGEDY IN ANY HOME, AS IS PARENT-CHILD ALIGNMENT AGAINST A SPOUSE." ^{BSB}

This is a sterling example of the injection of human opinion into the text of Scripture. Rather than perceiving the text within the context of revelation, it is lifted out of the inspired environment and deposited in the courtroom of human opinion. No regard is given to what God had declared to Rebekah before the birth of the boys (Gen 25:23), or to the pronouncement of God centuries later through Malachi (Mal 1:2-3), or to the inspired observation of Paul following the enthronement of Jesus (Rom 9:10-13). Nor, indeed, do such miserable commentators draw attention to the fact that Rebekah's assessment was identical to that of God Himself. And yet, this view continues to be embraced by multitudes of professing believers. The inroads that have been made by human reasoning in the assessment of Scripture is mind-boggling.

I propose that those to whom God has spoken directly, and who have believed what was said, have shaped their thinking around what was told to them. This was true of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and now Rebekah. To suggest that Rebekah's attitude toward Jacob

was nothing more than a natural reaction to his demeanor betrays an obtuseness that is inexcusable.

Here, contrary to nature, Rebekah will not defer to the preference of her husband. As a result of sin in the Garden, God said to Eve, "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen 3:16).

shaped by the promise God had made to her: "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen 25:23). For myself, I cannot see this passage as meaning anything else. The Scriptures do not say that Rebekah told Isaac of the Lord's answer to her petition. If she did, it had been some years since that particular event occurred, and now the twins

However, in this case, there is a departure from the norm, as there was with Abraham and Sarah (Gen 21:9-13). Rebekah chooses to prefer Jacob, while Isaac chose to prefer Esau. I propose that this was owing to Divine influence.

By this, God meant that the wife would naturally defer to her husband, with a strong desire to please him. Her husband would not rule her as a tyrant, but as one who cared for her. For this reason, he would lead the wife, and she would submit to that leadership. That is the normal course established for the husband and wife.

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were grown men. If Isaac had been told, it appears that he had forgotten the matter – but Rebekah apparently had not forgotten that unique occasion and revelation.

VARIOUS COMMENTATOR'S VIEWS

In order to confirm the extent to which human reasoning has penetrated the view of Scripture, and to show that it has not been totally successful, I provide the following observations of various commentators. I do this only to encourage you to think this matter out as thoroughly as you can, with a desire to please the Lord in your conclusion, and be in harmony with Him.

"Persons of quiet and retiring disposition, like Isaac, are often fascinated by those of more sparkling and energetic temperament, such as Esau; mothers, on the other hand, are mostly drawn towards children that are gentle in disposition and homekeeping in habit. Accordingly it is added — but Rebekah loved Jacob." PULPIT COMMENTARY

"... but Rebekah loved Jacob; more than Esau, being more at home with her, and of a milder disposition; and more especially being a good man, a partaker of the grace of God, and to whom she knew by the oracle the blessing and promise belonged." JOHN GILL

"Rebekah loved her son Jacob more than Esau. If, in so doing, she was obeying the oracle, she acted rightly; but it is possible that her love was ill regulated. And on this point the corruption of nature too much betrays itself. There is no bond of mutual concord more sacred than that of marriage: children form still further links of connection; and yet they often prove the occasion of dissension. But since we soon after see Rebekah chiefly in earnest respecting the blessing of God, the conjecture is probable, that she had been induced, by divine authority, to prefer the younger to the firstborn." JOHN CALVIN

"Rebekah becomes attached to the gentle, industrious shepherd, who satisfies those social and spiritual tendencies in which she is more dependent than Isaac." ALBERT BARNES

"This is an early proof of unwarrantable parental attachment to one child in preference to another. Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob; and in consequence of this the interests of the family were divided, and the house set in opposition to itself. The fruits of this unreasonable and foolish attachment were afterwards seen in a long catalogue of both natural and moral evils among the descendants of both families." ADAM CLARKE

"Rebekah was mindful of the oracle of God, which had given the preference to Jacob, and therefore she preferred him in her love. And, if it be lawful for parents to make a difference between their children upon any account, doubtless Rebekah was in the right, that loved him whom God loved." MATTHEW HENRY

"But Jacob was יִשְׂרָאֵל, "a pious man" (Luther); יָקָן, integer, denotes here a disposition that finds pleasure in the quiet life of home. יֹשֵׁב אֶת־הַאֶהָלָה, not dwelling in tents, but sitting in the tents, in contrast with the wild hunter's life led by his brother; hence he was his mother's favorite." F. DELITZSCH and G.F. KEIL

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We must never forget that the Scriptures are primarily a record of "the

Is not prophecy – all prophecy – determined by what the Lord Himself does? At the causal level, whatever eventuated in the fulfillment of the Word of God must have been wrought by God Himself. To postulate anything else brings one into dangerous territory.

wonderful works of God." They are a revelation of the Lord working out a purpose conceived before the foundation of the world. **That purpose is revealed as being opposed by Satan, and running counter to the thoughts and purposes of men.** Yet, the Divine intent always prevails, and whatever opposes it is always thrown down. Think of what has been overcome to this point – things that appeared obstacles to the fulfillment of the purpose of God.

- ➡ The sin of Adam and Eve.
- ➡ The murder of Cain.
- ➡ The moral decline of humanity.
- ➡ Human independence as seen in the plain of Shinar.
- ➡ The impotence of Abraham.
- ➡ The barrenness of Sarah.
- ➡ The notion of a substitute seed.
- ➡ The encroachments of Hagar and Ishmael.
- ➡ The intentions of Pharaoh.
- ➡ The intentions of Abimelech.
- ➡ The barrenness of Rebekah.
- ➡ Esau is the firstborn.
- ➡ Isaac's preference of Esau.

God is carrying out His purpose very precisely, with nothing being left

to chance. There are certain matters that in no way depend upon the responses of men. This must be clear in our minds as we proceed through the events of Genesis.

- ➡ The birth and maturity of the "fathers" themselves: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- ➡ The development of the Jewish nation, unto whom a child would be born, and a son given (Isa 9:6).
- ➡ The culturing of the land of Canaan, and Galilee in particular, for the ministry of the Messiah (Matt 4:15-16).
- ➡ The genealogy leading to Joseph and Mary (Matt 1; Luke 3).
- ➡ The coming of the Christ at an appointed time, and to an appointed place (Gal 1:4).
- ➡ The betrayal and death of Christ at the appointed time, and by the appointed people (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28).
- ➡ The resurrection of Christ (Matt 16:21; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor 15:4).
- ➡ The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1).

Which of these events could have, in any way, been caused by human decision? Is not prophecy – all prophecy – determined by what the Lord Himself does? God has said of Himself, *"I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."* (Isa 46:11).

ESAU AND THE POTTAGE

²⁹ *And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint . . .* Other versions read, *“Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary,”* ^{NKJV} *“Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished,”* ^{NIV} *“Once, Jacob was preparing a meal when Esau, exhausted, came in from outdoors,”* ^{GWN} *“One day Jacob was cooking stew when Esau arrived home exhausted from the hunt,”* ^{LIVING} and *“Jacob was boiling pottage (lentil stew) one day, when Esau came from the field and was faint [with hunger].”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “sod” means to “BOIL, OR TO SEETHE.” ^{STRONG’S} It is to cook something in water, as compared to roasting it with fire (2 Chron 35:13). “Pottage” is “BOILED FOOD, OR SOUP.” ^{STRONG’S}



How could anything significant happen under these circumstances?

➔ Jacob is cooking (boiling) a pot of

stew.

➔ Esau returns from an apparently fruitless hunt.

➔ Esau is weary with hunger.

How could such common circumstances, thrown together, result in anything of lasting significance? If the people involved are key figures in the purpose of God, and if God is at work in such circumstances, something of great significance can take place.

It is no wonder that Jesus warned us, *“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment”* (John 7:24).

In the circumstances of this text, something of great significance will take place. This is because they relate to the purpose of God.

- ➔ A birthright will legitimately pass to another person.
- ➔ A prophecy will be fulfilled.
- ➔ Two differing manner of people will be confirmed.
- ➔ An attitude toward an inheritance will be made known.



WHAT ARE CIRCUMSTANCES

Men must learn not to disdain circumstances, or be hasty to evaluate them. **These are occasions when human preferences are made known.** They are times when the nature of a person can be revealed. Both the children of God and the children of the wicked one are made known within the setting of circumstance.

All sin and all righteousness finds expression within the framework of circumstance. Choices are made when we assess circumstances. Eve made an epochal decision during a conversation with the devil (Gen 3:6). Cain determined to kill Abel while they were having a conversation (Gen 4:8). When Abraham was faced with the circumstances of his own impotence, and the barrenness of Sarah’s womb, upon hearing the promise of God, he determined to believe God (Rom 4:19). Sitting in the gate of Sodom, Lot chose to have a vexed soul rather than to enjoy the pleasure off sin for a season (2 Pet 2:8). Faced with hard circumstances in Egypt, Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ of greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Heb 11:26).

O that men would be more thoughtful in the midst of circumstance! Many are unaware that their eternal destiny may hinge on how they respond to the set of circumstances that are presently before them!

ESAU, BEING FAINT, ASKS FOR FOOD

^{30a} *And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint . . .*

Other versions read, *“Please feed me with that same red stew,”* ^{NKJV} *“Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there,”* ^{NASB} *“Quick, let me have*

some of that red stew!” ^{NIV} *“Give me a full meal of that red soup,”* ^{BBE} *“Let me have the whole pot of red stuff to eat—that red stuff—I’m exhausted,”* ^{GWN} and *“I beg of you, let me have some of that red lentil stew to eat, for I am faint and famished!”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

We learn from verse 34, that this “pottage,” or stew, was made of “lentiles,” “A LEGUMINOUS PLANT WHICH PRODUCES A FRUIT RESEMBLING A BEAN.” ^{EASTON}

Esau is so intent upon having some of this “pottage” that he even implores Jacob to feed him, as though

In the continued development of the purpose of God, an incident takes place that is largely misunderstood by the modern church – Given O. Blakely

was at the door of death itself. He does not even speak of the food specifically, but refers to *"that same red pottage,"* or *"that red stew."* ^{NIV}

Was Esau actually perishing for the lack of food, or was this a foolish overstatement of the case? I am inclined to think this was a decided overstatement of the case. It was driven by an inordinate accent on appetite. The truth of the matter was that Esau was ruled by his appetite. **His god was his belly (Phil 3:19), and thus appetite was sitting upon the throne of his affection.**

There are still those who are ruled by fleshly appetites, and the saints are warned about them. These are such as accentuate things pertaining to the body, just as Esau does in our text.

- ➔ **THOSE WHO SEEK THEIR OWN.** *"For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."* (Phil 2:21)
- ➔ **THEY LOOK TO THEIR OWN WAY.** *"Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant"* (Isa 56:11-12).
- ➔ **THEY EAT THE FAT.** *"Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock."* (Ezek 34:3)
- ➔ **THEY SERVE THEIR BELLY.** *"For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."* (Rom 16:18)

Compare Esau with Jesus

After He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, the devil leveled a temptation at Jesus that had to do with fleshly appetite – food. *"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread"* (Matt 4:3).

Jesus repelled the attack with these words, *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* (Matt 4:4).

I doubt that Esau had not eaten for forty days and forty nights, yet he approached Jacob as though he had not eaten for a long time, and was at the door of death. His assessment was a selfish one, driven by the lust of the flesh, and did not portray his real situation.

The Incident with Elisha's Servant

Another well known case of mis-assessment took place when the king of Syria was troubled by the insight of the prophet Elisha, *"Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city [Dothan] about"* (2 Kgs 6:14). When Elisha's servant had *"risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?"* (2 Kgs 6:15). However, the servant had not seen the real situation. Elisha said to him, *"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha"* (2

"And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha" (2 Kgs 6:18). A series of events followed that confirmed Elisha was really in charge of the circumstance.

When the Early Church was Threatened

On another occasion, it appeared as though the enemies of the apostles were gaining the upper hand. The apostles had been forbidden to preach in the Temple, had been incarcerated, and further threatened. Some might have imagined that this was the time to move to other areas, considering that the Lord had closed the door in Jerusalem. However, this was not how the early disciples thought. They gathered together and prayed concerning the situation. They knew who was in charge, and therefore asked God to grant them boldness to speak boldly in spite of the threats of men. Their prayer was answered, and the preaching continued without interruption (Acts 4:24-37).

Concluding Thoughts

Many a deluded soul has fallen into the snare of the devil because of a serious mis-assessment of his condition. **The people of God must learn to make righteous judgments, and not be unduly swayed by the appearance of things.**

I doubt that Esau had not eaten for forty days and forty nights, yet he approached Jacob as though he had not eaten for a long time, and was at the door of death. His assessment was a selfish one, driven by the lust of the flesh, and did not portray his real situation.

Kgs 6:17). Knowing the real situation, Elisha took charge of the circumstance.

A Significant Incident

This incident became the occasion

of a special name being given to Esau | and his descendants, making it a | significant incident.

THEREFORE WAS HIS NAME EDM

^{30b} . . . *therefore was his name called Edom.*” The word “Edom” means “red.” This name was derived from the appearance of the pottage. Esau himself was also the cause of receiving this name. When he was born, he “*came out red, all over like a hairy garment*” (Gen 25:25). However, when he said to Jacob, “*Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage;*

The “*land of Edom*” is associated with Esau’s descendants (Gen 36:16,17,21,31; Num 20:23; 21:4; 33:37; Judges 11:18; 1 Kgs 9:26; 2 Chron 8:17).

Further, Esau’s descendants are referred to as “Edomites” – “*And these are the generations of Esau the father*

five priests who wore the ephod (1 Sam 22:18). One of the adversaries God stirred up against Solomon was “*Hadad the Edomite*” (1 Kgs 11:14).

Name Changes

There are a number of name changes in Scripture, most of them having to do with Divine encounters.

➔ Abram to Abraham (Gen 17:5). This depicted Abraham as “*the father of many nations*” – a condition caused by God.

➔ Sarai to Sarah (Gen 17:15-16). The set forth Sarah as the “*mother of nations*” – a condition caused by God.

➔ Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28). This set forth Jacob as having power with God and man – the result of the blessing of God.

➔ Simon to Peter (Mk 3:16; Lk 6:14). This name set forth Peter as a man of spiritual solidity.

However, when we come to the name of Esau being changed to “Edom,” it is not owing to some great encounter with God, but rather to his craving for a pot of stew. Thus, he was identified with fleshly appetite – and it is all traced to a seemingly insignificant incident.

However, when we come to the name of Esau being changed to “Edom,” it is not owing to some great encounter with God, but rather to his craving for a pot of stew. Thus, he was identified with fleshly appetite.

for I am faint,” he forever identified himself with lower things.

Esau is particularly referred to as “Edom” in a number of texts.

➔ “*Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom.*” (Gen 36:1)

➔ “*Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.*” (Gen 36:8)

➔ “*These are the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these are their dukes.*” (Gen 36:19)

of the Edomites in mount Seir” (Gen 36:9). Confirming that “*the elder would serve the younger,*” the Edomites served David, who was in the lineage of Jacob: “*And he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David’s servants. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went*” (1 Chron 18:13). The Edomites were also noted for revolting against Judah (2 Chron 21:10).

Doeg the Edomite was set over the servants of king Saul (1 Sam 22:9). This is the man who slaughtered eighty-

SELL ME THIS DAY THY BIRTHRIGHT

³¹ *And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.*” Other versions read, “*First, sell me your birthright,*” NASB “*Sell me your birthright now,*” ESV “*First, sell me your rights as firstborn,*” GWN “*First give me your birthright in exchange for it,*” NAB “*but trade me your*

rights as the firstborn son,” NLT “*Sell me your birthright. Do it now,*” ISV “*Make me a trade: my stew for your rights as the firstborn.*” MESSAGE

There were other occasions when firstborn rights were overridden.

➔ Reuben forfeited the right of the firstborn: “*Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy*

In the continued development of the purpose of God, an incident takes place that is largely misunderstood by the modern church – Given O. Blakely

is not to be reckoned after the birthright. "For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's)" (1 Chron 5:1-2).

- ➔ Firstborn rights were conferred upon Manasseh instead of Ephraim: *"And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations"* (Gen 48:18-19).

- ➔ Solomon was chosen by God to have the birthright over his older brother Adonijah (1 Kgs 2:15-24).

- ➔ The son of Hosa, Semri, was given the right of the firstborn, even though he was not the firstborn son (1 Chron 26:10).

Thus, we see that the rights of the firstborn were not always cast in stone. There were exceptions to the rule, such as the one of Manasseh and Solomon.

Jacob did not resort to deception to gain the birthright, but was straightforward in his approach. He sought to obtain it by honorable means, even though Esau will not so regard the matter later.

SOMETHING WE MUST CONSIDER

We must again consider the limited revelation that was available to Jacob at this time. We assume that Rebekah had made him aware of the word of God concerning the elder serving the younger – although there is no word of God on he matter. Whatever may have been known of the promise, the details of it remained a mystery. How the birthright would be realized experientially was not known. **It would, however, be accomplished by God Himself.**

It is my persuasion, that this is the means through which that Divine choice would be carried out.

WHAT PROFIT IS THE BIRTHRIGHT TO ME?

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

I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE

"And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die . . ." Other versions read, *"I am about to die,"* NKJV *"I am going to die,"* DARBY *"I am almost dead,"* GENEVA *"Here I am, at death's door,"* NJB *"When a man is dying of starvation,"* LIVING *"I am going to come to an end,"* ABP and *"I am almost dead with hunger."* ERV

As one has said, the expression is *"UTTERED IN A SPIRIT OF EPICUREAN LEVITY, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TO-MORROW WE DIE"* (KEIL, KALISCH — 1 Cor 15:32). Commentator Lightfoot is of the opinion that this occurred during the famine mentioned in the next chapter (26:1), ^{JOHN GILL} and that game had, consequently, been difficult to find. Therefore, Esau had thoroughly exhausted himself in his hunt, and had obtained nothing for his efforts. Now he was at the point of death. I personally think this to be a strained interpretation.

I do not doubt that Esau thought he was at the point of death. However, I also have no doubts that he had not assessed his condition properly. He had leaped to a premature conclusion, and

done so without any regard for *"the God of all flesh"* (Jer 32:27).

will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa 10:4).

It is important to note that faith cannot be passed from one person to another. That is, at its root, a child cannot have faith because its parents had faith.

Thinking without God in Mind

Here we are exposed to a man who did not think of God, or associate Him with the processes of life. He reasoned just as though there was no God. This is the sort of man that prompted David to write, *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."* (Psa 14:1; 53:1). This was not philosophical language uttered by the mouth of the fool, as though he affirmed he doubted the existence of God. This is something that was said *"in his heart."* **It was a form of reasoning that proceeded from a lack of the persuasion of the reality and care of God.** Elsewhere David wrote of such a person in this way, *"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance,*

Esau had ascribed to food what ought to be ascribed to God Himself. It is God who alone gives *"life and breath"* (Acts 17:25). But this is not how Esau thought. Like a beast of the earth, he thought that life was maintained by food – even though God later made clear that this is emphatically not the case. (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4).

Although he was a son of Isaac, who feared the Lord (Gen 31:42) and was noted for his meditation (Gen 24:63), and reliance upon the Lord (Gen 25:21), **yet Esau had learned nothing in his regard from his father.** Paul refers to Esau as a *"profane person"* (Heb 12:16)–i.e. a *"godless"* individual, ^{NASB} who excluded the living God from his

thinking.

Faith Cannot Be Passed From One Person to Another

It is important to note that faith cannot be passed from one person to another. That is, at its root, a child cannot have faith because its parents had faith. It is true that Paul wrote to Timothy, *"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also"* (2 Tim 1:5). This did not mean that Lois and Eunice passed their faith along to Timothy, but that Timothy had embraced the *"one faith"* (Eph 4:5)

excuse the manner in which Esau thought. Although revelation had been comparatively sparse, sufficient had been made known by word and by example to conclude that life is, in fact, maintained by the Lord.

WHAT PROFIT IS THIS BIRTHRIGHT

" . . . and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Other versions read, *"so what is the birthright to me?"* ^{NKJV} *"what use then is the birthright to me?"* ^{NASB} *"what good is the birthright to me?"* ^{NIV} *"What use to me are my rights as the firstborn,"* ^{CSB} *"What good is my inheritance to me?"* ^{GWN}

Esau's answer makes perfect

weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom 4:21).

This was not, however, the manner in which Esau thought. He was a *"profane man"* – godless in the manner in which he thought.

PROPER THINKING

It is to be admitted that those who believe on Christ often face, what appears to be, impossible circumstances. Yet, there has been sufficient revelation to enable us to overcome both doubt and fear.

First, all things belong to us – and that includes death itself (1 Cor 3:21-23). By this, the Scriptures mean that we can benefit and triumph under any circumstance. By faith, we can experience profit from every circumstance, and can triumph over every foe.

Second, no person or circumstance external to our being can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus – and that also includes *"death"* (Rom 8:35-39). This is the heritage of all who are in Jesus, and is the perspective that is to be found in all who believe.

It is to be admitted that those who believe on Christ often face, what appears to be, impossible circumstances. Yet, there has been sufficient revelation to enable us to overcome both doubt and fear.

that also had dwelt in them. Like all who have faith, Timothy had *"obtained like precious faith"* (2 Pet 1:1). It had *"come"* to him (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:23) to him, not through Lois and Eunice, but from God.

Esau's Thinking Was Inexcusable

Even though the times were spiritually primitive, there is no way to

sense to the flesh. **However, that is only because circumstance loomed larger in his thinking than God.** Faced with his own impotence, Esau's grandfather had once received a promise from God that he was going to have a son through his wife Sarah – which was an absolute impossibility according to the flesh. How differently Abraham had reasoned under that impossible situation: *"And being not*

HE SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT TO JACOB

⁴³ *And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob."*

SWEAR TO ME THIS DAY

"And Jacob said, Swear to me this day . . ." Other versions read, *"give me your oath,"* ^{BBE} and *"swear an oath."* ^{GWN}

I do not doubt that, by this time,

it had become apparent that Esau was a *"profane"* person. Had he been trustworthy, Jacob might not have required him to swear an oath.

However, there is something more to be seen here and that is the critical way in which Jacob regarded this matter. He did not consider the procurement of the birthright an incidental and unimportant matter.

HE SWARE UNTO HIM

" . . . and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob." Perhaps without thinking of the implications of what he was doing, Esau consents to swear an oath. He was blinded by his own fleshly appetite, confirming he was, indeed, *"profane."*

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

I share the following to confirm

In the continued development of the purpose of God, an incident takes place that is largely misunderstood by the modern church – Given O. Blakely

that there are different views of this text. That difference is not necessarily legitimate. It does confirm that the way a person views the Word of God is largely determined by their conception of God and His manners.

"The conduct of Jacob in this transaction is difficult to defend Though aware of the heavenly oracle that assigned to him the precedence in his father's house, he was far from being justified in endeavoring, by "cautious, prudent, and conciliatory proposals" (Murphy), but rather by unbelieving impatience, despicable meanness, and miserable craft, to anticipate Divine providence, which in due time without his assistance would have implemented its own designs." PULPIT COMMENTARY

"Jacob did not act cruelly towards his brother,

for he took nothing from him, but only desired a confirmation of that right which had been divinely granted to him; and he does this with a pious intention, that he may hereby the more fully establish the certainty of his own election." JOHN CALVIN

"Jacob was no doubt aware of the prediction communicated to his mother, that the older should serve the younger. A quiet man like him would not otherwise have thought of reversing the order of nature and custom. In after times the right of primogeniture consisted in a double portion of the father's goods (Deuteronomy 21:17), and a certain rank as the patriarch and priest of the house on the death of the father. But in the case of Isaac there was the far higher dignity of chief of the chosen family and heir of the promised blessing, with all the immediate and ultimate temporal and eternal benefits therein included. Knowing all this, Jacob is willing to purchase

the birthright, as the most peaceful way of bringing about that supremacy which was destined for him. He is therefore cautious and prudent, even conciliating in his proposal. He availed himself of a weak moment to accomplish by consent what was to come. Yet he lays no necessity on Esau, but leaves him to his own free choice. We must therefore beware of blaming him for endeavoring to win his brother's concurrence in a thing that was already settled in the purpose of God. His chief error lay in attempting to anticipate the arrangements of Providence." ALBERT BARNES

You can see in these views the power the knowledge of God itself has upon the thinking of men. Even though some have been prone to think in a natural manner, yet their understanding of God has made them suspicious that such thinking is not in order.

JACOB GAVE ESAU BREAD AND POTTAGE OF LENTILES

^{34a} *Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way. . . "*

JACOB GAVE ESAU BREAD AND POTTAGE

"Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles . . . "



True to his word, Jacob gave Esau not only a helping of the pottage, but bread and drink as well – a full meal. Esau had agreed to the terms, and the agreement was carried out. Judging from appearance, one would never have imagined that a birthright had changed hands. Esau was no longer the rightful heir. Jacob now assumed that position.

ESAU ATE, DRANK, AND WENT HIS WAY

" . . . and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way . . . "

Esau ate, drank, and went his way just as though nothing of significance had taken place. His appetites had been assuaged, and that was sufficient for him. He evidenced no regrets that he had bartered off his birthright for a meal.

This is the way of the flesh. It places such a high priority on the here and the now, and on its own appetites, that it has no care what is lost for the satisfying of fleshly desires and cravings.

When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, immediately *"the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons"* (Gen 3:7). **But no such sensitivity was found in Esau.** Sin had grown in its grip upon humanity, so that now there was no shame, and no effort to cover it. Esau simply *"ate, drank, and went his way."*

Many a soul has bartered away

their souls for temporal pleasures and indulgences, with no awareness of what they have actually done. Jesus asked, *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matt 16:26). Adam and Eve exchanged theirs for a taste of fruit (Gen 3). Esau exchanged his soul for some bread, drink, and pottage. Judas exchanged his for thirty pieces of silver (Matt 26:15). Achan exchanged his soul for *"a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold"* (Josh 7:21-24). Ananias and Sapphira exchanged theirs for a portion the sale of a piece of property (Acts 5:1-2). Balaam exchanged his soul for *"wages"* (2 Pet 2:15).

By way of comparison, Moses chose to *"suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Heb 11:25). Faced with a choice between vain religious tradition and knowing Christ, Paul counted *"all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"* (Phil 3:8).

But Esau was a profane person, and did not think in this manner. He chose his belly over his birthright, and

walked away as though nothing of significance had happened. Temporal satisfaction was enough incentive for

him to sell his birthright. His generation is still among men, and is of a significant number.

THE DIVINE ASSESSMENT

^{34b} . . . *thus Esau despised his birthright.* Other versions read, “*caring little for his birthright,*” ^{BBE} “*making little account of having sold his first birthright,*” ^{DOUAY} “*So Esau contemned his birthright,*” ^{GENEVA} “*Esau showed his contempt for his rights as firstborn,*” ^{GWN} “*so Esau slighted his birthright,*” ^{SEPTUAGINT} “*That was all Esau cared about his birthright,*” ^{NJB} “*Thus did Esau spurn the birthright,*” ^{TNK} “*indifferent to the loss of the rights he had thrown away,*” ^{LIVING} “*Esau treated as worthless the rights of the first-born,*” ^{ABP} “*showing how little he thought of his rights as the first-born,*” ^{CEV} “*So Esau showed that he did not care about his rights as the firstborn son,*” ^{ERV} “*after having belittled his own birthright,*” ^{ISV} “*That’s how Esau shrugged off his rights as the firstborn,*” ^{MESSAGE} and “*Thus Esau scorned his birthright as beneath his notice.*” ^{AMPLIFIED}

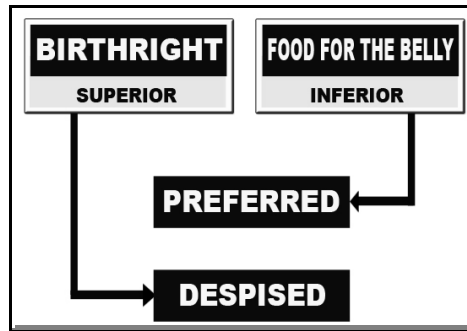
In reporting this event, the Holy Spirit does not present any thing uncomely about Jacob. The fault is found with Esau – and it is a most serious one. He “*despised his birthright.*”

The Word “Despised”

It is important to note what the word “despised” means.

- ➔ In the **Hebrew** tongue, the word “despised” means, “(1) TO DESPISE, HOLD IN CONTEMPT, DISDAIN.” ^{STRONG’S}
- ➔ In the **Greek** language it means, “TO CONTEMN, DESPISE, DISDAIN, THINK LITTLE OR NOTHING OF,” ^{THAYER} “AS TREATING WITH NEGLECT, DISREGARD, SLIGHT,” ^{FRIBERG} “CONTEMPT FOR SOMETHING BECAUSE IT IS THOUGHT TO BE BAD OR WITHOUT VALUE,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} AND “TO LOOK DOWN ON.” ^{GINGRICH}
- ➔ In **English**, the word “despise” means:
 - “1: TO LOOK DOWN ON WITH CONTEMPT OR AVERSION.
 - 2: TO REGARD AS NEGLIGIBLE, WORTHLESS, OR

DISTASTEFUL.” ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}



EXPLAINING THE EVENT

In providing an explanation of this event, there are at least two options open to us.

- ➔ God foresaw that Esau would despise his birthright, and therefore determined that Jacob would have it instead. In this case, Esau’s decision drove the Divine determination. **This is not an acceptable view**, for God expressly states that He “*works all things according to the counsel of His will*” – not according to the circumstances (Eph 1:11).
- ➔ The circumstances took place under Divine direction. That is, **this is how God carried out His counsel.**

We know the latter scenario is the correct one because of apostolic teaching on the matter. “*And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;), It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*” (Rom 9:11-13).

The words “*For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil,*” indicate that **the works of the children did not enter into the decision God made:** “*the elder shall serve the younger.*” Neither were they a factor in the statement, “*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*”

The purpose of God stood firm, not because of what Jacob and Esau did, but according to His “*election.*” That election was “*not according to works, but of Him that calleth.*” That is, the preference of God for Jacob was not a response to what Jacob or Esau did, but was in strict comportment with His “*call*” – a call that He alone initiated.

In the purpose of God, if the normal pattern does not allow for Divine choice to be carried out, the norm is simply placed to the side for that time.

- ➔ Thus, the thief on the cross was saved by a special dispensation of grace (Lk 23:43).
- ➔ The Gentiles were found by God without seeking Him (Isa 65:1; Rom 10:20).
- ➔ Paul was an apostle, although he was “*born out of due time*” (1 Cor 15:8).

AN OVERVIEW OF ROMANS 9:10-13 THE CHILDREN

In this case, “*the children*” are Jacob and Esau. They had the same father and the same mother. They were born at the same time, after been together in the same womb. If Divine privileges are based upon what is generated within the womb, both of “*the children*” will be accepted by God. If having the same parents is the criteria, both will be received by God.

In the case of Ishmael and Isaac, there was a difference between them as natural children. They had different mothers. One was free and one was a slave. One was born of the will of the flesh, the other by the will of God. One might suppose, therefore, that God's choice of Isaac was based upon these conditions. That is not the case, however, for **Isaac was chosen because he was promised**. This will now be confirmed to us, for no such distinctions existed in Jacob and Esau. They had the same mother, and were both conceived and born as a result of Divine working. Yet one was chosen as a child of promise, and other was rejected. Both were the seed of Isaac, yet one is loved and one is hated.

The Lord is opening His *"purpose"* to us, showing that when we are called in accordance with that purpose (Rom 8:28), He WILL work all things together for our good. If we see that we have no merit of our own, He will show us His workings in us are not based upon our merit. His purpose and His calling are the preeminent matters in this discussion. Elsewhere, the matter of the response of faith is the critical matter, but that is not the subject here.

BEFORE THEY DID ANYTHING

" . . . for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil." The purpose is not merely to establish WHEN the Divine choice was made, but WHY it was made. It is to be acknowledged we are now in waters that are deep. Yet, faith can walk on these waters, and safely navigate through them without harm. Because it is the Spirit that is speaking, we are to *"hear"* what He is saying.

The words that are here referenced were spoken to Rebekah. They confirmed Divine intent to her. After she had conceived by Isaac, Rebekah had an unusual experience. The Scriptures inform us that *"the children struggled within her."* Apparently, the sensations she experienced were most unusual. We have no indication that she realized twins were in her womb. Thus, when they struggled with each other, it may

have appeared as though an untimely birth was about to occur. Perhaps thinking the miraculous conception was about to be thwarted, she reasoned within herself. Then she took the matter to the Lord. It is written, *"But the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If all is well, why am I like this?'"* So she went to inquire of the LORD" ^{NKJV} (Gen 25:22). Our text expounds the answer given to her by God Himself. The answer was not based upon the foreseen conduct or works of the children. The fact that they had not yet been born confirms the determination of WHO would continue the lineage of Abraham was independent of human merit or achievement. Esau was not yet profane, and Jacob was not yet believing. Esau had not yet despised his birthright, and Jacob had not yet prevailed with God.

The Manner of Reasoning

I must continually come back to the reason for this passage. It is the Spirit's extended commentary on Israel *"according to the flesh."* He is showing this nation was strictly chosen and developed by God. It was done in strict accordance with His own choice, and without regard to human merit. Israel's distinction was not the result of its conduct, but of God's choice. They were favored above other nations because God chose to do so. They did not deserve it.

In this passage, the Lord is expanding on the manner in which He chose and developed Israel. He made critical distinctions between the fleshly offspring of Abraham, *"to whom the promises were made"* (Gal 3:16). The point is that He has not done anything to lead us to believe nothing further can happen in this nation. The Prophets delivered words concerning them as a nation that have not yet been fulfilled. There is not a word in Scripture that suggests these promises have been withdrawn from that nation, or that God is even capable of making a promise only to withdraw it.

Although appearance seems to belie the possibility, there is still a preserving remnant in this nation, just

as surely as there was a Joshua and Caleb during Israel's rejection of the promised land. That sanctifying remnant remains just as surely as it did on the day of Pentecost, or as surely as it was found within the womb of Rebekah.

PURPOSE ACCORDING TO ELECTION

God did not announce His intentions AFTER Jacob and Esau were born, but while they were yet unborn. The reason for this is, *" . . . that the purpose of God according to election might stand."* Other versions read, *"in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand,"* ^{NASB} *"in order that God's purpose in election might stand,"* ^{NIV} *"so that God's purpose of election might continue,"* ^{NRSV} *"in order that God's purpose and his selection might be effected,"* ^{BBE} and *"but in order that it should be God's choice which prevailed."* ^{NJB}

Purpose might not Fail

The *"purpose"* of God is to be a cornerstone in our thinking. That purpose was conceived independently of the achievements of men, and before the world was created. It is in this sense that *"the works were finished from the foundation of the world"* (Heb 4:3). Thus it is referred to as *"His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself"* (Eph 1:9). For this reason, it is called *"His OWN purpose"* (2 Tim 1:9), and the *"counsel of His own will"* (Eph 1:11). That purpose determined the formation of Israel (Deut 7:7-8). It is also the basis for our calling (Rom 8:28; 2 Tim 1:9).

Isaiah referred to the firmness of God's purpose in this manner. *"The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand"* (Isa 14:24).

The words that follow were not merely foretelling what was going to happen. They are not an analysis of human conduct. Rather, they are the cause for the continuation of Abraham's seed. They are the reason why the nation did not disappear, or was expunged by the devil.

Implemented By Choice

While "choice" is normally ascribed to men (and, indeed, they are to choose), **the Scriptures place the greater emphasis upon Divine choice.** It is really God's choice that makes the difference.

- ➡ God chose the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut 4:37; 10:15).
- ➡ He chose David, taking him from the sheepfolds (Psa 78:70).
- ➡ He chose Israel to be a special people (Deut 7:6).
- ➡ God chose the priests of Israel (Deut 18:5; 21:5).
- ➡ He chose Saul to be king (1 Sam 10:24).
- ➡ The Lord chose Solomon (1 Chron 29:1).
- ➡ He chose Solomon to build the temple (1 Chron 28:10).
- ➡ God chose who should bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15:7).
- ➡ God has chosen us in Christ Jesus before the world began (Eph 1:4).
- ➡ The Thessalonians were from the beginning *"chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth"* (2 Thess 2:13).
- ➡ Those in Christ are a *"chosen generation"* (1 Pet 2:9).
- ➡ Jesus chose the Apostles (Luke 6:13).
- ➡ Paul the Apostle was a *"chosen vessel,"* separated from the womb (Acts 9:15; Gal 1:15).

The fact of Divine choice cannot be questioned. There are simply too many declarations of it to allow such doubts.

Our text tells us WHY God

chooses. **It is in order that His purpose according to election might stand.** In other words, God **causes** His purpose to come to fruition. If an enemy arises to thwart that purpose, God will cause the enemy to fail. If, through faith, a person embraces that purpose, God will *"make him stand"* (Rom 14:4). If His purpose is unknown to Rebekah, He will announce to her what is going to happen with the children in her womb. The purpose of God is why she was enabled to conceive, and the purpose of God would be served by the fruit of her womb.

A Practical Application

If you wonder what the outcome of believing God will be, find what God has declared concerning faith. Search out what word He has given concerning those who believe. Become knowledgeable of His revealed purpose for believers. See what He has determined for those who believe the record He has given of His Son! When you have acquainted yourself with those *"exceeding great and precious promises,"* then believe that *"God cannot lie!"*

NOT OF WORKS

" . . . not of works but of Him who calls." When it comes to the *"purpose"* of God, **the works of men play no foundational role.** God's *"election"* is not determined by what men do, but by what God wants! I understand that men have taken the word *"election"* and developed cold and calculating doctrines. Some of them have created doubts and fears in tender hearts. But these abuses do not remove the fact that God is an electing God!

There are choices He makes that have nothing whatsoever to do with what you have done, just as surely as God's choice of Jacob was not based upon what he had done! In fact, the promise was given before he was even born, or had done anything. The meaning of the text is that God made his choice without regard to what either Jacob or Esau would do. **He was motivated by something higher.**

Elsewhere we are told that

salvation, or justification, is *"not of works"* (Eph 2:9; Tit 3:5). In fact, righteousness is imputed to us *"without works"* (Rom 4:6).

This does not mean the individual does not work, but that human activity is not the basis, or foundation, of Divine acceptance. God's purpose is the determining factor, not our works. When, by faith, we embrace the salvation He presents to us, He begins to work in us in strict accord with His purpose. As it is written, *"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen"* ^{NKJV} (Heb 13:20-21).

A Brief Explanation

The cursory reader may imagine that I am merely rambling about on this point. These rather lengthy explanations are necessary because of two extreme conditions that exist in the church. First, vast segments of God's people never hear a single word about Divine choice, election, or the purpose of God. Second, large bodies of believers have adopted a view of Divine choice, election, and the purpose of God, that stifles faith and awakens fear. In some, it even produces lethargy and slothfulness.

When the Spirit justifies the work of God upon the basis of His election, we had best give heed to His words. When the nation of Israel is associated with God's election and purpose, we had better take care how we speak of them. It is in order to bring our thoughts into conformity with what God chooses and designs.

THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER

" . . . it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.'" When Rebekah "inquired of the Lord" concerning the activity in her womb, she received an answer. "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of

people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen 25:23). She was carrying twins, and did not know it. But they were no ordinary twins. Two different bodies of people were represented by them. They would be two different kinds of people. One nation would be a stronger and more aggressive than the other. It would have more of a military bent. The same father, the same mother, yet two manner of people! With Abraham, contradicting children were in the same house. With Rebekah, they were in the same womb at the same time.

Esau became the father of the Edomites (Gen 36:9). Over thirty dukes, or chiefs, came from Esau, and they were all noted for their aggression (Genesis 36). They were the enemies of Israel, even though they descended from Isaac. They were *"stronger than other people."* Notwithstanding their strength, in the days of David, *"all the Edomites became David's servants"* (2 Sam 8:14). Their strength gave way to Israel whom God made the *"stronger people."*

The Elder Will Serve the Younger

The Lord added one other distinctive word. *"And the older shall serve the younger."* This is a most unique promise. It doubtless refers to the passing of the birthright from Esau to Jacob. Under ordinary circumstances, the family inheritance went to the firstborn. The Scriptures provide the details of the birth of Jacob and Esau, confirming Esau to be the firstborn son. *"And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them"* (Gen 25:24-26).

Throughout their lifetime, Esau certainly did not serve Jacob. In fact, as soon as the birthright, in accordance with the Divine promise, had been

gained by Jacob, he left the home, fleeing from Esau. We have a record of Joseph's brothers bowing to him, fulfilling the dreams God gave him (Gwen 42:6). But there is no record of Esau bowing to Jacob. Instead, Jacob bowed *"seven times"* to him (Gen 33:3).

The service of Esau to Jacob was not revealed during their lives – at least not outwardly. In the purpose of God, the desires of Esau had to give way to the desires of Jacob when he sought to gain back the inheritance. Isaac told him that was not possible. *"And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother"* (Gen 27:40). 996 years later, king Nebuchadnezzar put the mountains occupied by the inhabitants of Esau to ruin (Jer 49:16-18; Ezek 25:13-14; Joel 3:19; Mal 1:2-3). All of this was done in the interest of the children of Jacob. Truly, the elder did serve the younger! The benefits of the covenant made with Abraham passed through Jacob and evaded Esau!

All of this was in direct contradiction of the flesh, and even of rules of inheritance established by God. Under the Law, the firstborn could not be disinherited (Deut 21:15-17). Yet, Esau the firstborn lost his inheritance and could not gain it back. It is quite true that he *"despised his inheritance"* (Gen 25:34). Yet the answer of God to Rebekah was given before Esau was born, or had committed any evil.

JACOB HAVE I LOVED

" . . . As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved.'" This quotation is taken from Malachi 1:2, and is a most powerful consideration. *"'I have loved you,' says the LORD. Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Says the LORD. 'Yet Jacob I have loved.'"*

This is another form of Divine reasoning that makes no sense at all to the flesh. First, it is important to note that Jacob and Esau, while individuals, are not here considered as individuals, but as progenitors and representatives of races: *"two nations, and two manner of people."* The Spirit is showing us

how God made a distinction within the offspring of Abraham, confirming *"they are not all Israel who are of Israel."*

Malachi's prophecy shows God's preference of Israel, descendants of Jacob, over the Edomites, descendants of Esau. God affirms His love to Israel, and they questioned the affirmation. *"I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?"* (Mal 1:2a). The people had been judged by God, and therefore concluded He had abandoned them. They had concluded *"Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!"* (Ezek 37:11). They were living in the aftermath of Nebuchadnezzar's devastation of Jerusalem and the consequent seventy-year Babylonian captivity. How could God love them? The Lord confirms His love for them by comparing them with the Edomites.

ESAU HAVE I HATED

" . . . As it is written . . . but Esau I have hated." The additional words of Malachi cause the text to come alive. *"But Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness. Even though Edom has said, 'We have been impoverished, But we will return and build the desolate places,' Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'They may build, but I will throw down; They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever. Your eyes shall see, And you shall say, 'The LORD is magnified beyond the border of Israel'"* ^{NKJV} (Mal 1:3-5).

Briefly stated, God's hatred for Esau is seen in the Edomites inability to recover themselves from the devastation Nebuchadnezzar brought upon them. They might build, but God would throw down what they raised up. His indignation against them was *"forever,"* and Israel would see it. The phrase *"beyond the border of Israel"* signifies that God protected Israel's border, while decimating that of Edom. Thus God's love for Israel is confirmed by their recovery! There was a remnant among them, and they rebuilt the waste places. As Isaiah declared, *"In a little*

wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer" (Isa 54:8). But Esau He hated! Although impoverished by the enemy and grievously chastened

by the Lord, yet He cried out to them, *"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt*

again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry" (Jer 31:3-4). But Esau He hated! Why did He do this? Because He purposed to do so. He would take his place behind Jacob.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/7/12. We will continue our series of lessons in the book of Genesis. The forty-first lesson will cover verses 1 through 23 of chapter twenty-six: "ISAAC AND THE FAMINE IN CANAAN." Isaac now experiences the same thing his father Abraham did – a famine in Canaan. He determines to go down into Gerar for sustenance. The Lord appears to him, telling him not to go down to Egypt, but to remain in the land he will show him. Isaac then dwelt in Gerar. He is questioned by "the men of that place" concerning his wife, and he tells them Rebekah is his sister. After God worked that while circumstance for Isaac's good, Isaac sowed seed and reaped one hundred fold in the same year. It is written that he was so prosperous the Philistines "envied him." The meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.