

Lesson for September 28, 2008

Old Testament Survey

Isaac, Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:19-36:43)

Isaac, the son of Abraham, was the father of twin sons, Esau and Jacob. We are not given a great deal of information about Isaac's life, but we are given enough to understand that he was a believer and a man who did his best to follow God. His two sons were quite different in character and in their response to God and His plan.

Isaac was the son of promise to Abraham and Sarah. He was the only legitimate son of Abraham and the heir to all things. Even the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed to Isaac. Isaac married Rebekah, who was unable to conceive until God performed a miracle in response to Isaac's prayer. The result was the birth of twin boys, Esau and Jacob.

At an old age and with poor eyesight, Isaac was deceived by Jacob into giving his blessing to Jacob. Effectively this made Jacob the head of the family above his older brother Esau. Esau had sold his birthright earlier to Jacob for a bowl of pottage. The Bible says that Esau hated his birthright, caring more for the things of the world than his family's business and livelihood.

The only restitution that Esau sought was from his father and not from God, which tells us a lot about his spiritual condition. Esau is used by the writer of Hebrews as an illustration of a person who had fallen away from grace. This passage says that Esau sought to regain his inheritance, but could not bring himself to think differently about his decisions. He had no concern for the spiritual blessings that he had given up earlier when he sold his birthright, and could not take responsibility for his own bad decisions. (Genesis 25:29-34, 27:1-46; Hebrews 12:16-17)

Throughout Scripture Jacob is used as an illustration of grace and Esau is used as an illustration of human works. (Romans 9:10-14) Even though Jacob made many mistakes and was crafty and deceitful at times, he also had a side of his person that loved God. Jacob's name was later changed by God to Israel - the name by which the entire nation became known. Obviously Jacob struggled with his two natures, as we all do as believers.

The Sin Nature vs. New Spiritual Nature (Romans 6:14-23)

v.14

“For sin shall not have dominion” - Greek “kuriotes” - rulership
“for ye are not under the law” - Greek “nomos” - rules, regulations, the Mosaic law in context
“but under grace” - we have a new higher law: the law of Christ, a new covenant of grace

v.15

“What then” - in view of the fact that we no longer are required to keep the law
“shall we sin” - shall we continue to sin? Is it okay to be sinning?
“because we are not under the law but under grace” - in other words, “Is grace a license to sin”?
“God forbid” - let it not be so; definitely not

Principle: Just because the believer is no longer bound by the law to keep it, this is not a license to practice sin. God, as a good father, will discipline the believer. However, you can judge your own sin, confess it and remove the discipline from God and, in some cases, the consequences.

v.16

“Know ye not” - do you not already know
“that to whom ye yield yourselves” - Greek “paristemi” - present
“servants to obey” - Greek “doulos” - slaves
“his servants” - slaves
“ye are to whom ye obey” - present active indicative means to keep on obeying
“whether of sin” - the sin nature
“unto death” - temporal death or non-production of righteousness
“or of obedience unto righteousness” - producing practical righteousness by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit

v.17

“But God be thanked” - Greek “eucharisteo” - thanksgiving
“that ye were the servants of sin” - though you were slaves to the sin nature
“but” - conjunction of contrast
“ye have obeyed from the heart” - Greek “kardia” (cardiac) - the mind
“that form of doctrine” - the doctrine of salvation; the gospel
“which was delivered to you” - Greek “paradidomi” - literally a mold which gives its shape to what is cast in it; the doctrine which was formed in you

v.18

“Being then” - at a point in time when you believed in Jesus Christ as Savior (obedience to the gospel is believing it)

“made free from sin” – in Christ positionally made free from penalty, power and presence of sin

“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all those that believe.” (Romans 10:4) This means that Christ fulfilled the just requirements (righteousness) of the law in order that He might provide righteousness to all who believe.

“ye became the servants of righteousness” – “slaves” of the Holy Spirit which produces the righteousness of Christ in the life of the believer

Principle: Before you could produce the righteous character of Jesus Christ under the filling of the Holy Spirit, you had to be born again. You had to be freed from the slave market of sin. Before salvation, you did not have the power to overcome the sin nature or execute the Christian life. This is why “Lordship Salvation” (making Christ Lord of your life) is a false gospel and according to Paul is accursed.

v.19

“I speak after the manner of men” - I am going to use an analogy from life. The Bible must be interpreted in the time in which it was written. Slavery is the analogy.

“because of the infirmity of the flesh” - Greek “astheneia” - weakness, inability to produce results. Greek “Sarkikos” - of the flesh or body, where the sin nature resides

“for as ye have yielded your members to uncleanness” – Greek “akatharsia” - immorality

“and iniquity to iniquity” - Greek “anomos” - lawlessness, unrighteousness, adding sin upon sin

“even so now” - now that you have been set free from the legalism found in the law and manifested in the sin nature

“yield your members” - present your bodies (Romans 12:1)

“servants of righteousness unto holiness” - slaves of the Holy Spirit, which produces practical righteousness (Experiential Sanctification)

Principle: As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are either going to be a slave to the sin nature or a slave to the Holy Spirit. It's a matter of volition.

v.20

“For when ye were the servants of sin” - as unbelievers you were slaves to the sin nature

“ye were free of righteousness” - not able and not required to produce divine righteousness (Isaiah 64:6)

v.21

“What fruit had ye then in those things” - fruit is production and the answer is “none” (only human good)

“whereof ye are now ashamed” - now that you are a believer

“for the end of those things is death” - death here is not spiritual death, but the lack of production of divine good; as an unbeliever even the very best deeds that you perform fall short of the righteousness of God (divine good)

Principle: The unbeliever cannot gain the approval of God. This is what religion attempts to do.

v.22

“But now” - now that you are saved

“being made free from sin” - positional sanctification

“ye have your fruit unto holiness” - experiential sanctification

“and the end everlasting life” - ultimate sanctification

v.23

“For the wages of sin is death” - Greek “opsonion” - hire, pay of any sort, what is earned. Sin here is a reference to Adam’s original sin imputed at birth and passed down genetically to the human race. Death is the second death, which is the lake of fire.

“but the gift” - Greek “charisma” - a gift of grace, freely bestowed gift

“of God is eternal life” - non-meritorious system of faith, the gift is received by faith

“through Jesus Christ our Lord” - by means of the Lord Jesus Christ