

Isaac thought he was “old” and probably felt old when he was about 137 years old. But he lived for another 47 years, seven years longer than his father Abraham had. He was blind that whole time and apparently some years before and understandably inactive, often ingredients of self focused thoughts and depression. He decided he was about to die so he had better get about tending to blessing his sons, at least the eldest, his favorite, Esau. The one whom he loved because of the savory meat he hunted and prepared for him. Isaac was reclining and had to rise on both occasions when his sons entered with savory meat for him. His indolent life was probably a natural result of his blindness. Imagine fifty more years blind, lying around in a tent. He doesn’t seem to have had much communion with God in the years leading up to his decision to bless Esau. He had seemed to have begun a relationship with God when he reached Beersheba after leaving Gerar and the Philistines. He even built an altar after God appeared to him there. But then he seemed to have lapsed in to an unguarded, lethargic, unspiritual state. A New Testament exhortation to Hebrew believers refers to Isaac and Esau.

Hebrews 12:12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. 14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Esau literally screamed with frustration and begged his father to bless him, too. But Isaac had now realized the huge mistake he had almost made. He had trembled violently when he first discovered what he had almost done. A deep trembling of unspoken repentance? He seemed to quickly have regained his focus and did not seem to even consider rescinding his blessing upon Jacob, despite the deceptive circumstances under which it had been given. And Esau did not ask him outright to revoke it. He seemed know that was not possible. So he seemed to be resigned to, but not accepting of, the permanence of Isaac’s blessing. (And what value would a blessing be if it could be rescinded at any time.) But he decided to avenge himself by killing his brother after his father died and laying hold upon the whole inheritance. His plans were thwarted when Jacob was sent away and Isaac lived for another 47 years.

Rebekah, frightened when hearing of his (strangely unguarded) threats, approached Isaac. She never openly confessed or repented of her part in the great deception. And Isaac apparently never questioned nor rebuked her about it. But she, still devious and distrustful of her husband, did not mention Esau’s threats but approached

him indirectly of her concern about Jacob possibly marrying Canaanite wives as Esau had forty years before. This had been a grief of mind for both Rebekah and Isaac and now they seemed to be drawn together by their mutual concern for Jacob. He was indeed the son who was under the irrevocable prophetic blessing of God given through the Priestly, Prophet, Patriarch, Isaac. **“I have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed!”** And he and his descendants have been, and will yet be more.

We wonder where was Isaac’s heart when he was about to bless Esau, not Jacob? The terms earthly, fleshly, carnal, temporal, profane, come to mind. Did Esau’s earlier disrespect for the birthright possibly reflect his father’s attitude toward it while he was away from God for a while, indulging himself with savory meats and ease? But Isaac apparently finally awoke to his spiritual lethargy and fleshly lusts when he discovered Jacob’s deceit and realized he had almost blessed the wrong son. He trembled violently when he realized the near disaster and the consequences he had almost brought upon his descendants and the whole human race. And it was a lengthy lapse in his personal walk with God that had led to the crisis. Might we miss some vital crossroads in our lives if we lapse in our attention to His word and prayer? God’s promises and intents were carried forward in Isaac’s case, though not as it would have had Isaac been more attentive to his walk with God. And what if Jacob and Rebekah had had faith to wait for the promised outcome of God’s promise to her regarding her unborn twins? How would He have accomplished it? To their credit both understood and valued God’s prophetic promise and the deeper blessing God had already promised Abraham and Isaac and their seed. They wanted them at any cost, while Esau, the profane son, had already despised his birthright and proven his unworthiness for the blessing normally bestowed upon the elder.

Esau’s anger cooled after a bit and he met amiably with (a fearful) Jacob twenty some years later and they later joined together to bury their father Isaac. But his bitterness apparently did not subside before his sons, his family and his descendants were infected with it. They retained the bitterness well after he himself had apparently dropped it. So, as prophesied by Isaac in blessing Esau, his descendants were continuing and persistent enemies of Jacob’s descendants, the children of Israel. And they will be until finally destroyed by the Lord Jesus upon His return to reign. Have we infected our family with some bitterness over some mistreatment or slight, real or imagined? If so try to root it out as soon as possible. Don’t let feuds begin, much less persist.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and

clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

But what about God's prophetic statement to Rebekah regarding the destiny of her twins? Did He really condemn Esau to eternal judgement even before his birth? Some try to take this idea from God's statement regarding Esau in Malachi (1:2,3). But Paul, when he quotes it (Romans 9:6-13), clearly doesn't take it as presenting a predisposition against Esau from before his birth.

While the Omniscient God certainly knew Esau's final fate from before the beginning, He nevertheless began early appealing to Esau's soul. He genuinely sought his heart and allegiance. He repeatedly used extraordinary persuasive measures, granting exceptional opportunities to repent of his pride. The "elder shall serve the younger" was certainly not a condemnation to doom.

God, in his sovereign right, indeed consigned Esau to a secondary role subordinate to Jacob. Esau's acceptance of this would have been the key to (and sign of) his eternal salvation. God announced this role for Esau to Rebekah even before she gave birth. Did she tell Isaac? If so why

did he ignore her? He could have raised Esau with the anticipation that his life was to walk with God and to do God's good pleasure. He could have raised his son to embrace the role God assigned him and earnestly and humbly fulfill it. If he tried, he didn't succeed. But God didn't hate Esau and his descendants until they clearly, consistently and persistently hated Jacob and his descendants for centuries. Their hatred culminated ultimately in the crucifixion of the Promised Seed, to which Herod the Idumean (Edomite) consented, Luke 23:7-15. Yet the Lord Jesus had graciously blessed people from Idumaea (Edom) among others that thronged Him from far corners of Palestine.

Mark 3:8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

What grace. Rejoice in it. No one born is outside of God's "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2Peter 3:9. But Esau would not bow! He never repented, and few if any of his Edomite descendants have, though not unloved by God. The freely offered "pass key" to heaven remained unused leaving only the open shaft down into the darkness of hades for Esau.

By Ronald Canner, September 15, 2010