

Esau, Jacob or Israel?

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon calls listeners to turn away from the spirits of Esau and Jacob and become Israel, striving with God for revival, laborers, and more of His Spirit.

Scripture: Genesis 32:24, Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:9, Luke 18:1, John 2:3, Revelation 22:20

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the journey of spiritual growth, highlighting the need to discipline our enthusiasm into steady zeal, walk through trials with songs of praise, and present ourselves as living sacrifices daily. He emphasizes the importance of choosing between the paths of Esau, who seeks self-indulgence without sacrifice, and Jacob, who strives to get ahead through manipulation. The sermon encourages listeners to become like Israel, who wrestled with God and emerged as a godly, God-pleasing individual. By striving with God in prayer and seeking His will above all else, believers can experience transformation and blessings in their lives.

Transcript

Read: Genesis 25:19 to 32:32

After the honeymoon when God starts teaching us to discipline our shaky enthusiasm into steady burning zeal, when we have to learn how to walk through those valleys of trial and still get up each morning with songs of praise, still go out into each monotonous day in joyful obedience,

- every day presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice,
- every day renewing our minds in the atmosphere of heaven,

we find that our hearts have a tendency to veer off on one of two ways:

the way of Esau,

or the way of Jacob.

You'll be at prayer in your room with the door shut and suddenly it won't be you, the disciple of Jesus Christ, it will be Esau falling asleep on his knees, or Jacob planning a new scheme.

You'll be gathered with other believers singing praises to God. Suddenly Esau takes over and your mind is off on a hunting trip or Jacob comes to the forefront and sets your thoughts to work on a new way to promote yourself.

But Isaac had a third son. His name was Israel. Esau and Jacob were Isaac's sons by the flesh. Israel was born the night Jacob came to the end of himself. The night when Jacob quit wrestling with men and started wrestling with God, Jacob died, and Israel came to birth in him.

If there is any lesson we need to learn at this hour, it's to drive out of our hearts the spirit of Esau and the spirit of Jacob, and become Israel.

Each of us is either an Esau or a Jacob or an Israel.

Esau - If you saw Esau out hunting you'd be impressed. How skillful! How energetic! He could run over those hills like a gazelle. Hunting was his hobby. It wasn't work, it was fun. But at any other time, except the hunt, Esau was a slob.

- He couldn't cut wood.
- He couldn't plow or plant or clean the latrine.
- He was useless when it came to finding animals lost from the flock.
- It was even too much trouble to draw water from the well.

"Just let me hunt. Let me sit down to a good meal. And the rest of the time let me alone with my Black Label, my T.V., and my nice soft bed."

The Esaus in the Body of Christ live for their hobby - whether it's Bible prophecy,
or testing other people's spirits,
or spiritual gifts,
or the New Testament Church.

The rest of the time they're vegetables. They want the benefits of the Kingdom of God, but without discipline, without sacrifice, without any kind of self denial.

Oh, they have plenty of energy when they're doing their own thing. But when they stand at the door of the Kingdom of Heaven they have no strength to knock, no strength even to push the doorbell, so tired they just can't pray.

And so, whenever a crisis comes, they do exactly what Esau did: they sell out! Whenever they have to choose between self-indulgence and the Kingdom of God, self-indulgence wins.

They keep going to fellowship - when they feel like it,
praying - when they feel like it,
helping their brother - when it's not too much of a strain.

But in time their souls are so weighed down with spiritual flab that they can hardly move. They've degenerated into great big over-grown turnips.

The Jacobs, on the other hand,

- don't have time for hobbies,

- don't have time to sit down in front of their T.V.'s five hours a night.

They are driven by a single compulsion: to get ahead.

The name Jacob - Supplanter - truly describes them. They lie awake nights figuring out how they can get ahead of their brother. Before they were reborn, they were doing it in the world, now they're doing the same thing within a religious framework.

Before Jacob was born, he already had a grip on Esau's heel.

"I got hold of your heel, Brother, and I'm going to get ahead of you." - That was the story of Jacob's life.

First, he wangled Esau out of his birthright - bought it from Esau for a dish of lentil soup. Then, with his mother's help, Jacob cheated Esau out of his father's blessing, disguising himself as his brother, when Esau was still out hunting.

So the Jacobs in the Body of Christ direct their energies, not toward pounding on the door of God's Kingdom, but toward supplanting their brothers. Forever scheming, pushing, gossiping, always worried about losing what it took so much scheming to get.

God was merciful to Jacob. He gave him a taste of his own medicine. He made Jacob spend twenty years in the house of his uncle Laban who was more like Jacob than Jacob. Laban cheated Jacob again and again - made Jacob's life miserable, even while he prospered.

Finally, Jacob takes his wives, his servants, his children, and his flocks and heads for home. But the closer he comes to his homeland, the more frightened he is of what's facing him there; his brother Esau has threatened to kill him.

Jacob is trapped,

- He can't stand being around Laban, a man like himself.

- He's afraid to go on to Esau whom he has cheated all his life.

So Jacob turns to God. For the first time in his life, Jacob seriously directs his energies toward God instead of toward flesh-and-blood. He prays.

He wrestles with the angel of the Lord. Jacob doesn't pussyfoot, he puts everything into it.

"I won't let go unless you bless me!"

And when that night of wrestling ends, Jacob is no longer Jacob the supplanter, but Israel, "he who strives with God."

As dawn breaks and Israel limps away from that wrestling match, we see a new man,

a godly man,

a God-fearing man,

a God-pleasing man, the father of the twelve tribes.

- You don't get that way by vegetating.

- You don't get that way by striving with other men.

You get that way by pounding on the door of heaven, by directing your heart, soul, strength, and mind God-ward.

Ask and it shall be given you -

Seek and you shall find -

Knock and it shall be opened to you -

and this asking, and seeking, and knocking involve your will - you bring your will to bear upon God's will.

God wants you to strive with Him.

- Stop being a self-pitying slob, and start striving with God.

- Stop pushing other people around, and start striving with God.

- Stop your whining and complaining, and start striving with God.

If we put half as much energy into pounding on heaven's door as we put into indulging our flesh and scheming against each other, our lives would burn with God's glory.

"But that doesn't sound very Christian - striving with God."

What do you think that Canaanite woman was doing? Did she tiptoe up to Jesus and say,

"I praise you, Lord, for things as they are!

I praise you, Lord, that my daughter is severely possessed by a demon!"

There are books on the market that tell us that's what we're supposed to do, but that's not what she did.

She said, "Lord, do something for me! Lord, have mercy! Lord, deliver my child!"

When the disciples rebuffed her she kept right on crying out. When Jesus insulted her, she kept right on insisting.

"So I'm a dog, Lord. I'm your dog - heal my daughter!"

Did Jesus scold her for pestering?

"O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire", and her daughter was healed instantly.

She was a Gentile dog, but she had more of the spirit of Israel than any Israelite around. She directed her energies not toward man, but toward God. She didn't let herself get side-tracked by man's insults or hardness of heart. She kept her eye fixed on God's grace.

"I know you're going to heal my child.

I know you're going to fulfill your word."

When you start praying like that, you change.

The Israel who stepped forth in the morning was a different man from the Jacob who started praying the night before.

When you start praying like that, things change.

- Esau decided not to kill Israel.
- The woman's daughter was healed.
- The judge avenged the persistent widow against her adversary.
- The neighbor got up and gave the man bread in the middle of the night.

Strive with God for revival to fall on the church. Come to God like Mary came to her son,

"They have no wine. Lord, send life."

Strive with God for more laborers in those harvest fields.

"The harvest truly is great but the laborers are few. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest."

Strive with God for more of His Spirit in your own life. Read Luke 11. What else is Jesus telling us than this? People come to us for help and we lack the living bread. Cry out for it! Pester heaven for it!

Strive with God for the hastening of Messiah's return.

Thy Kingdom come!

Thy will be done!

Come, Lord Jesus!

Strive with God for every need that's on your heart. Stop complaining and start praying! Of course God knows what you need before you ask. But He wants you to ask. Your asking enables Him to give you blessings that will come in no other way.

The call to every Esau and Jacob reading these words is to turn and become an Israel. In the name of Jesus Christ and by the power He gives you through His cross and Spirit right now, aim your heart,

- not self-ward,
- not man-ward,

but God-ward and hold it here.

And you'll make it through those valleys of trial with songs of praise. You'll still be walking in God's will, still pouring out your life for your brother when Messiah comes.

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