

(Genesis) 52 - Lessons From the Generations of Esau

by S. Lewis Johnson

The sermon explores the genealogies of Esau, emphasizing their historical and spiritual significance in relation to Israel.

Duration: 47:17

Scripture: Genesis 36:1-8, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Esau"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker acknowledges that there are certain chapters in the Bible that are difficult to expound systematically, such as Genesis chapter 36 and the genealogies in first Chronicles. He compares this challenge to an actor who portrayed Abraham Lincoln and emphasizes the importance of inward reality versus outward appearance. The speaker then contrasts the characters of Esau and Jacob, highlighting Esau's attractive qualities as a 'man's man' and his generosity. However, he also acknowledges that there are negative aspects to Esau's character. The speaker concludes by expressing his uncertainty about how to approach expounding on Genesis chapter 36, as even other commentators have not provided homiletical suggestions for it.

Transcript

Turn to Genesis chapter 36 for our scripture reading, and in order to make it just a little easier for you, rather than reading the series of names that largely make up this chapter, the best part of the chapter is probably the first eight or nine verses, so for our scripture reading I'll read verse 1 through verse 8, and then in the brief treatment of the sections of it in the message, we'll read the rest of the chapter, and I want to conclude with some lessons from the generations of Esau. But for our scripture reading let's turn to Genesis chapter 36, and we will begin with verse 1 and read through verse 8. Now these are the records of the generation of Esau, that is, Edom. Remember that Edom is another name for Esau.

Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan, Ada the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholobama the daughter of Anna the granddaughter of Zibion the Hittite. Also Bassamath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth, and Ada bare Eliphaz to Esau, and Bassamath bore Ruel. And Aholobama bore Jeush and Jalom and Korah.

These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. Then Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all his household and his livestock and all his cattle and all his goods which he had acquired in the land of Canaan and went to another land away from his brother Jacob. For their property had become too great for them to live together, and the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock.

So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir. Esau is Edom. Five times in this chapter reference will be made to the fact that Esau is Edom.

These are the records of the generations of Esau, the father of the Edomites. Now if you notice you have a Bible with them. If you have a Bible with marginal notes, literally it is the father of Edom in the hill country of Seir.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. The subject for this morning in the exposition of the book of Genesis is lessons from the generations of Esau. Mr. Pryor as you know likes to stand up every Sunday morning or so and tell us that what we do in Believers Chapel is try to expound the Bible chapter by chapter in a systematic way.

Well that sounds very good and of course it is something with which we are in harmony. That is what we try to do. But there are certain chapters in the Bible that are rather difficult to expound in a systematic way.

And there are some of them that do not seem to have a great deal of spiritual, spiritually significant material and we are faced with one today. In fact I think if I were seeking to prove that the Bible should not be expounded systematically chapter by chapter I would on one unsuspecting young man who affirmed the opposite like to ask him what he would do with Genesis chapter 36 and the generations of Esau or 1 Chronicles and the chapters there and a few of the other chapters in which genealogies appear in the Bible. It reminds me of a story told by Jimmy Konzelman the well-known football coach.

He said that there was an act about the name of Frank McGlynn who like some football coaches wanted to be a perfectionist. He spent his life doing Lincoln because he looked a great deal like President Lincoln. And so he acted and played the part of Lincoln on the legitimate stage and in the movies.

In his living room Mr. Konzelman said he dressed like Lincoln. He assumed Lincoln postures. He walked like Lincoln.

And on one particular day he walked out of his house dressed in the habiliment of Lincoln. He had on a top hat, a frock coat, striped trousers. He walked down slowly to the sidewalk, surveyed one end of the block, turned, surveyed the other, and then started walking with deliberately long strides as Mr. Lincoln was supposed to do toward the corner.

And as he was walking a fellow across the street who knew him had another fellow by his side looking at him said look that guy will never be satisfied until he's assassinated. So I think about that when I come to Genesis chapter 36. These these fellows who say that you can expound the Bible chapter by chapter.

Well they're going to be assassinated when they come to Genesis chapter 36 and chapters like that. Perhaps that's my destiny to be assassinated trying to expound a chapter such as this. I noticed that even my Lutheran friend Professor H.C. Lupo, he doesn't even bother to have any homiletical suggestions at all following this particular chapter in his commentary.

He doesn't say it's bad to preach on this chapter or good. He just assumes, I presume, that anybody with any perception at all would not dare to attempt to expound Genesis chapter 36. In the first place and perhaps the greatest difficulty is that by the time you learn how to pronounce all of the names there wouldn't be any other time to prepare the message thereafter.

But there is one thing that we can say we are interested in genealogies. All of us are interested in genealogies. Of course we're interested only in our own, but nevertheless we're all interested in genealogies.

Have you noticed the look on the faces of others as you speak of your genealogy? And then have you noticed the feeling that you have when they begin to speak of theirs? Are they anxious to know, for example, that you have all of the necessary papers in hand to be a member of the Sons of the Revolution? Or of the Sons of the American Revolution? Or of the Society of the Cincinnati? Or perhaps even have papers that would enable you to become a member of that supposedly exclusive Boston Society, the ancient and honorable Artillery Society? This past week I was rearranging some papers because after I've sold my house the only office that I have is the office here at the church. And I have a little filing cabinet and I had some letters from my father. In fact I had a pamphlet or rather a manila envelope from my father which he had sent me some years ago, some genealogical information.

And since I was preaching on the genealogies I opened it up and thought well perhaps there's some comment in there that might be applicable to the message that I'm going to give. And one of my ancestors is a German by the name of Daniel Strobel. He came from Germany and he came over on the same boat with George Whitefield.

In fact in the genealogical information is the statement that Mr. Whitefield paid his passage over, quote, for services rendered. What the services were I do not know. I'm presumed it's prepare messages on the genealogies for George Whitefield or something like that.

And then I remembered that I also, you see there are things you can get out of a genealogical chapter after all. I have in my library a book entitled Our Heritage and it is a book on one of my own family descendants. Unfortunately the name has always been an embarrassment to me.

My grandmother's name was Boozer. I tell all of my friends that I've often wondered now, I'd like to have time to do research perhaps when I retire I'll be able to do research and find out if people are called Boozer because they acted like the Boozer family or if the Boozer family got their name because they acted like Boozers. I don't know.

But anyway this chapter is a chapter on the genealogies and interestingly enough and this is to the point, interestingly enough this information in Genesis chapter 36 must be important because it's repeated again, almost all of it, in the first chapter of First Chronicles. And so if, I know what you're thinking, suppose you had to preach on First Chronicles next week what would you say then on the genealogy? But it must be important because the Holy Spirit has included this information not once but twice, twice in the word of God. The brotherhood of Jacob and Esau living on in the relationship between Israel and Edom is never forgotten in the Old Testament.

The painstaking detail of Genesis chapter 36 of First Chronicles chapter 1 is a witness to the importance of the kinship that existed between Israel and Edom. The usual pattern in the book of Genesis is when a new stage in the story is to be begun there will be a chapter or a section in which the collateral branch of

the family is completed and then dropped and then the main branch story is picked up again. So in Genesis chapter 37 we will pick up the story of Joseph and the remainder of the book of Genesis will be largely the story of Joseph the son of Jacob.

But in the meantime we must dispose of the collateral branch of Esau. Jacob's family will contain, will be the story of the remainder of the book. Now the last chapter, chapter 35 closed with the words verse 28 and 29.

Now the days of Isaac were 180 years and Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people an old man of ripe age and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him. So Esau and Jacob joined hands once more over the corpse of their father and then their ways separated without, so far as we know, their paths ever crossing again. When we turn to Genesis chapter 36 we have the records of the generations of Esau.

Now Esau is Edom. Remember back in the beginning that was one of the names that was given to Esau. We read for example in verse 25 of chapter 25.

Now the first came out red all over like a hairy garment and they named him Esau or red. And so Edom and Esau are the same. Five times in this chapter that point will be made.

Now let me just for a few moments go through the chapter pointing out the significant sections of it, making just a comment or two, reading from verses 9 on. But let me first just say a word about verses 1 through 5 because in these first five verses we have the record of Esau's wives. If you had time to study the references to Esau's wives in the preceding chapters and this chapter you would notice that there are some differences.

These differences have puzzled some of the students of the book of Genesis. They are probably due to either some transmissional problems in textual criticism or and probably preferably to alternative names that were given. It was not uncommon at all for individuals to be given more than one name.

Esau himself is testimony to that. His name was not only Esau but also Edom. And so it's not common, it would not have been uncommon for alternate names to be given to these individuals, particularly since it was the custom for wives to have more than one name.

And then while only three wives of Esau are mentioned previously, it's possible that he really did have four. So that should not concern us. We do not have enough information to be absolutely certain about the solution of that difficulty.

His choice of the hill country, which is the second section of the chapter in verses six through eight, is an interesting one in this respect. It shows us what was the clinching factor, as someone has put it, in the separation of Esau from Jacob. He chose Mount Seir and he chose to go there because he and Jacob both had become so wealthy that the land could not maintain all of their flocks.

We read in the seventh verse, for their property had become too great for them to live together, and the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock. Now the remaining, the preceding ten chapters have given us various details of why it was necessary for them to separate, but this was the clinching factor. This was the occasion.

They had so many animals in their flocks and herds that they could not maintain themselves on the same general land, and so Esau chose the hill country of the south. He's not the only person who loves hill country. Texans have loved a certain part of the country as hill country as well.

Well, that's Esau kind of land, at least. Now then, let's turn to verses nine through fourteen, where we have Esau's sons and grandsons referred to. It is by these individuals, Esau's sons and by his grandsons, that Esau has become the father of the Edomitish nation.

So beginning now with verse nine through verse fourteen, we read, these are the records of the generations of Esau, the father of the Edomites, or the father of Edom, in the hill country of Seir. These are the names of Esau's sons. Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife, Ada.

Reuel, the son of Esau's wife, Bassamath. And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatham, and Kenaz. And Temna was a concubine of Esau's son, Eliphaz, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.

These are the sons of Esau's wife, Ada. And these are the sons of Reuel, Nahath and Zerah, Shammah and Mizah. These are the sons of Esau's wife, Bassamath.

And these were the sons of Esau's wife, Aholabama, the daughter of Anna, the daughter of Zibion. She bore to Esau, Jeush, and Jalom, and Korah. The most interesting name in this list is the name Amalek, of course.

In verse twelve we read, she bore Amalek to Eliphaz, because Amalek became one of Israel's bitterest enemies and attacked the nation when they came out of Egypt in the time of the Exodus. Defeated finally by Saul, chastised often by David, finally the remnant of the Amalekites or Amalekites were, was exterminated by the Simeonites under Hezekiah. But the striking thing about this, and it will bear on a point that I would like to make later on, is that Esau's descendants in Amalek posed serious problems for the nation Israel down through the years.

The fourth section of the chapter is a description of Esau's chiefs, and it's found in verses fifteen through nineteen, which we will now read. If you have an authorized version, you will notice that instead of chiefs, the term dukes is used. It is the rendering of the Hebrew word alufim.

An elif or an alufim, these words, elif refers to a thousand, alufim evidently is a reference to individuals who had authority over thousands or over large numbers. So chiefs is probably better than dukes as a rendering. Verse fifteen now reads, these are the chiefs of the sons of Esau.

The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn of Esau, are chief Timon, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, chief Korah, chief Gatham, chief Amalek. These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom. These are the sons of Adam.

These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son, chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizar. These are the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom. These are the sons of Esau's wife, Basimath.

And these are the sons of Esau's wife, Ahol-Ibama, chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah. These are the chiefs descended from Esau's wife, Ahol-Ibama, the daughter of Anna. These are the sons of Esau, and again notice the reference, that is Edom.

And these are their chiefs. The next section has to do with the chiefs of the Horites. Esau evidently married into the leading family, and the term Hivite and Horite probably overlap.

And so in this way he is related to the Horites. These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land, Lotan and Shobal and Zibion and Anna, and Dishan and Ezer and Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom.

And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Himam, and Lotan's sister was Timnah. And these are the sons of Shobal, Alvin and Manaheth and Ebal, Shefo and Onam. And these are the sons of Zibion, Aya and Anna.

He is the Anna who found the hot springs in the wilderness when he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibion. It's a rather intriguing note with the ring, as one commentator has put it, of a true family tradition. If you have the authorized version, I believe that instead of hot springs you have found the mules.

But the word is found only here in Hebrew, and consequently it's impossible to be absolutely certain of its meaning. Hot springs is more likely the rendering. It's the rendering of some of the versions at this point.

Verse twenty-five, And these are the children of Anna, Dishan, and Aholibamah, the daughter of Anna. And these are the sons of Dishan, Himdan and Eshban and Ithran and Hiran. These are the sons of Ezer, Bilhan and Zahavan and Akhan.

And these are the sons of Dishan, Uz and Aran. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, Chief Lotan, Chief Shobal, Chief Zibion, Chief Anna, Chief Dishan, Chief Ezer, Chief Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, according to their various chiefs in the land of Seir.

In the next section, verses thirty-one through thirty-nine, we have the kings of Edom. And let me read them now. Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel.

That's rather interesting. If you are reading through the Word of God and thinking about these things as you read in the genealogies, perhaps you don't read like I do. I must confess that when I read genealogies, it's very difficult to keep concentrating.

Perhaps that's my weakness, but I find it very difficult. And I must confess this had escaped me until I read it with a little thought. Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel.

Now if Moses wrote this, Moses wrote this before Israel had any king. How did Moses know that Israel was to have kings? He says, before any king reigned over the sons of Israel. Now that is a puzzle, and many have therefore concluded that this material does not come from the hand of Moses, but from some later individual who knew about kings.

But it's not so easy as that. That's the easy way out. That's to say, Moses didn't know about any kings and therefore must not have been written by Moses.

However, Moses has written about kings. He has said, for example, when he penned the words that God spoke to Abraham, he put down kings shall come from thee. And then later in the reaffirmation of these promises to Jacob in just one of the preceding chapters, chapter 35, we had read concerning Jacob that

kings were going to come out of him.

In the preceding chapter, chapter 35 and verse 11, we read, God also said to him, I am God Almighty, be fruitful and multiply a nation, and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. Now Moses was a man of faith. We surely would grant that.

And if he were a man of faith, and particularly if he wrote this when he was in Egypt, serving under Pharaoh, it would be natural for him to long for the time when Israel might be delivered. If he wrote it just after he had been delivered from the hand of Pharaoh, he would have been especially appreciative of being out of the control of a Pharaoh kind of king, and looking forward to a kind of king that God might give. And so I find it no difficulty at all in believing that when Moses wrote, these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel, that he was simply writing in faith, believing the word of God that Israel would in time have a king.

It would have been natural for him to write that. And then when we turn over to Deuteronomy chapter 17, verses 14 through 20, we read these words. God had said to Moses, when you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me, you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses.

And so even Moses knew from direct word of God that there would come a time when kings would be set over the nation. Even though it was not God's will that Israel have his, what shall we say, it was not his preceptive will that Israel should have an earthly king. He knew that in the decretive will of God there would be kings ultimately over the nation Israel.

So verse 31 then is no real insurmountable difficulty after all. Let me read now beginning with verse 32. Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Denhabah.

Then Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah became king in his place. Then Jobab died, and Hosham of the land of the Temanites became king in his place. Then Hosham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place, and the name of his city was Aveth.

Then Hadad died, and Samlah of Mazrechah became king in his place. Then Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates River became king in his place. Then Shaul died, and Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor became king in his place.

Then Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar became king in his place, and the name of his city was Pow. And his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mizahab. And finally, the final list in verse 40 through 43 is the final list of the chiefs, in which the emphasis rests not on the relations to one another, so much as on the sphere of ownership and influence.

Now these are the names of the chiefs descended from Esau according to their families and their localities. By their names, Chief Timnah, Chief Alvah, Chief Jetheth, Chief Ahol-Ebamah, Chief Elah, Chief Penan, Chief Kinez, Chief Timan, Chief Mibzar, Chief Magdiel, Chief Eram. These are the chiefs of Edom.

That is Esau the father of Edom according to their habitations in the land of their possession. Now what are the lessons that we may learn from this rather tedious chapter of the generations of Esau? Carolyn Custis, as I said earlier, said that one of the greatest of the lessons, no doubt, was that here is a chapter designed to test the perseverance of Bible readers. And I thought that was a rather perceptive comment,

because it certainly does test the perception of the perseverance of Bible readers.

There are also some other lessons, and I think the first and most obvious one is that there is a generous breadth of interest on God's part in the whole of the human race, even in the non-elect. And while we talk about the elect and the non-elect and the distinction that is made between them by God, because it is he after all who said, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated, distinguishing grace is taught in the word of God, that does not mean that God is not interested in the destiny, the history, and the destiny of the non-elect. The great emphasis that is laid even upon the identity of Esau, five times being called Edom, drawing attention to Edom and the descendants of Esau, stresses the fact that God's interest does stretch out to all of the individuals for which he is ultimately responsible.

That's one lesson, and I think it's an important lesson. There is another lesson, and it is the certainty and individuality of divine judgment. If as is true from the study of Holy Scripture that Edom, one of Israel's bitter enemies, was a nation composed largely of those who were opposed to the plan and program of God, it's nevertheless true that Esau's family names are given here, name after name, to remind us of the fact that God does keep books.

And the name of every single individual who has ever been born is found in the books of heaven. We read in the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation, the great vision of the white throne. And in the twelfth verse of Revelation 20, the apostle John writes, And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne.

And the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books according to their deeds. All of the dead, all of the non-elect, they were judged from the things they are to find their way to the great white throne judgment, and there in the books will be their names and all of the details of their life from the time that they drew their first breath until the time of their end.

And it will all pass before men who are to be judged, and according to that particular passage, not one single individual shall escape that great white throne judgment who appears there as one of the spiritual dead. And so the tedious thirty-sixth chapter of the book of Genesis reminds us of the fact that God does keep books on his creatures. And the time is coming when, if we have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall have to stand before that great white throne judgment and have our own life unfolded as it is found in those books that shall be opened.

There's another lesson, and it's the importance of the inward reality versus the outward appearance. Perhaps there's no greater contrast in all of the Bible than the contrast between Esau and Jacob. Esau, the man of the field, the man's man.

Most men love a man's man. And Esau was a man's man, kind of man. And consequently, in that respect, he's a lovable kind of man, an attractive kind of man.

In addition, he was a man who was generous. It's true he had certain other characteristics that were different, but there were some positive things about his character that made him outwardly attractive. Jacob, on the other hand, was not, so far as we can tell, outwardly attractive.

He was a man who would have repelled us, probably. And no doubt the first impression that we get is that God is somewhat unfair, that Jacob is not a very lovable character, and why should he have been chosen

and not Esau in the first place? So there is probably no greater contrast in the Bible than between these two twin brothers who came from the same womb. And yet, as you study the Bible and look at it a little more closely, you see some things that are quite different.

You notice, for example, in Genesis 25 and verse 34, that it is stated by the Holy Spirit that Esau despised his birthright. Now Jacob, with all of his unattractiveness, wanted the birthright. For the birthright gave spiritual privilege.

Esau despised his birthright. Furthermore, when Esau did not inherit the blessing, his first thought was, when the opportunity comes, I'll murder Jacob. Now that revealed a great deal of his character.

That, too, is specifically stated in Genesis chapter 27 and verse 41. Later on, he married the Hittite wives, which were such a trouble for the whole of the family, in disobedience to the apparent will of God. And finally, when he discovered that it was pleasing to Isaac for Jacob to marry someone within the covenant group of people, he went out and sought to please by marrying someone within the covenant group of people.

Like the person who looks around and sees that some of his friends like to go to church, and so to please them, he will go to church. Or, engage in some other religious activity in order to please, when there is no real inner spiritual response at all. The New Testament puts the finger upon Esau very plainly and says, Esau was a profane man.

Now that does not mean he used profanity. That word is a word that means simply he was secular. He was sensual.

He was a man in whose mind and heart there were no thoughts about God. A very attractive, man's kind of man, who acknowledged the existence of God, might well have sat around where, in the family worship, and appeared to at least be happy with what was going on, but inside there was no response to the things of the Lord. He was a profane man.

Do you remember the incident in Samuel's experience? And Samuel was a prophet, mind you. The Lord said, I want you to go to the house of Jesse, and I want you to anoint a new king. And so he went there.

And David, the young boy, was out on the field with the flocks. And the other sons passed before Samuel, and the first one came before him, and his name was Elah. And Samuel, the prophet of God, says, ah, he must be the man, because he looked so imposing.

And God said to Samuel, Samuel, that's not the man. God doesn't look on the outward as man does. He looks on the inward.

And finally, of course, Samuel anointed David. For you see, in the final analysis, it's not so much the outward appearance in spiritual things as it is the inward reality. And consequently, in the choice of Jacob, as over against Esau, we see illustrated this extremely important principle.

It is the inward reality that is the important thing in spiritual things. That's a very important illustration of truth that we find in the lives of these two. Now I think another thing that we see here is the issues of irreligion, or of the kind of profane existence that Esau had.

Because as you look at Esau's descendants, what do you see? Well, you see degeneration in the line. And finally, you see men like Amalek emerging from Esau's descendants, because there is always degeneration in the line of those who turn away from the truth of God. In the case of the line of Esau, you will soon note that there are individuals who arise who are bitter enemies of the truth.

If you trace the Old Testament history of these individuals out, you will find that some of them became worshipers of the devil. And finally, God, in judgment upon Edom, left it a desolation. So the issues of irreligion are the devil worship, degeneration, bitterness toward the plan and program of God.

One thing that we've learned is that the things that we believe should influence the way that we live. And surprisingly, it is the Muslim people who have given us the illustration. Because if there is one thing that we've learned from Iran, it is that one's religion affects our daily lives.

But one thing that the Muslim people should have reminded us of is this, that a person's faith permeates the whole of his cultural and personal life. And in our own country, we have forgotten that. And because we have tended to so separate the truth from the application of the truth, that even we believers have failed to realize the application of the truth that we hold.

In American evangelicalism, politics has dominated religion far more than religion has dominated politics. We have gotten real excited over little things like prayers in our schools instead of being particularly disturbed over the humanistic assumptions of our society and challenging them in their presuppositions. We've forgotten about that.

And we have forgotten that biblical Christianity is to pervade every aspect of our life. And what we do believe will pervade it, even if we seek to avoid it. And I say to you who are sitting in this audience, you fathers and you mothers, what you believe today will have its issues in the lives of your children.

The greatest thing that you could ever do for your child is to lead them to Christ. And the greatest thing that you could ever do for your family is to give them an illustration of obedience and submission, so far as you are enabled by the Holy Spirit of God to the principles of the Word of God. Because the inevitable issue of your faith will be seen in your children.

And you can see in Esau the issues of the kind of life that Esau lived. One of the most remarkable pieces of research that was ever done on a popular level was the research in the descendants of Jonathan Edwards. It's amazing to see how many college presidents, how many outstanding professional men, how many outstanding statesmen have been related to Jonathan Edwards, a man who sought by the grace of God to carry out in his life the principles of the Word of God and suffered for it.

There's another thing that is important here, and that is the lasting and often crucial importance of the apparently insignificant details. That seems a rather insignificant detail, does it not, that Esau should be separated from Jacob? And yet that very fact, recorded here in verses six through eight, is the touchstone of Near Eastern politics today. In fact, it is the touchstone of world politics today.

That simple little fact that Esau separated himself from Jacob. In fact, when we have Edom versus Israel, we have simply another way of saying Arab versus Jew, or to put it theologically, sin and human responsibility versus divine electing grace. It's all found in that simple little separation of those two people.

And we are today living in the resultant strife and struggle of the separation of these two men, Jacob and Esau. Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated. Finds its application down through the centuries.

Of course, we have illustration of the faithfulness of God to his promises. Well, of course, we would say, yes, he's faithful to Jacob because Esau left the land, and Jacob finally got the land. Isn't it interesting he got the land because Esau left it? In other words, he received the land and the birthright in God's time, apart from all his scheming and intrigue by which he had sought to obtain the birthright and the blessing previously.

But God was not only faithful to Jacob, he was faithful to Esau. He had given him certain promises. He had told him, for example, that nations would come from him.

Later on, he had said that he would bless him. He told him he would deliver him from the authority and dominion of Jacob, too. And he was delivered from the authority and dominion of Jacob.

And in addition, he poured out on him lavish personal wealth. Esau was a wealthy man. He had so much that he was forced to leave Jacob.

He was blessed that much. We Americans would say, after all, what do you need if you have wealth? And Esau had wealth. Of course, he lacked the one fundamental thing that so many of us Americans lack, and that's the relationship with the law of God, which means everything.

And then in addition, he was prominent. Look at all of the chiefs that have come from him. Look at the important families that have come from his family.

But it's a family of profane men, a family of men who really do not care about spiritual things. Many of them attend our churches today. They even attend Believer's Chapel.

They have no real desire to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they attend our services because it's nice to attend services. Maybe their wife wants them to attend, or their husband wants them to attend, or their children do. But really, in the final analysis, we belong more with the family of Esau than we do with Jacob.

And the last lesson, and I guess the most important of all, is the lesson of the necessity of divine grace. Because when you come right down to it, Jacob was just as lost as Esau was, naturally. He was just as big a sinner.

Jacob was depraved just as Esau was depraved. But Jacob was the object of divine electing grace. And so the result is that Jacob's genealogy is like a garden in bloom while Edom's is like a desert waste where he went to live.

Jacob's leads on to the Lord Jesus Christ and Esau's to the black hole of the lake of fire. And the story is told most plainly and clearly by the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 9 and verse 6 through verse 13 where he outlines the history of Israel as he sees it. And he sees it as the story of divine electing grace.

This is what Paul writes, and with this I shall close. He says, it's not as though the word of God has failed, for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. Neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants.

But through Isaac your descendants will be named. Not all who attend the church or who are members of a local church are truly the church, to put it in our language. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

For this is a word of promise, at this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this, but there was Rebekah also when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac. For though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, isn't that interesting, had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to his choice might stand? Not because of works, but because of him who calls.

It was said to her, the older Esau will serve the younger Jacob. Just as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I have hated. And the final analysis, Jacob is what he is because of divine grace.

Esau is what he is because he was a sinner. And he did not come to the one who dispenses the grace of God. I say to you this morning, there is a way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are lost when we fail to come. We're saved only by the grace of God the Holy Spirit who in efficacious activity through the Spirit brings us to the knowledge of ourselves and to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And I appeal to you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ to ask yourself the question, just really, to what family do I belong? The family of Esau or the family of the faithful? May God give you grace to come to the Lord Jesus Christ through whom there is life.

Let's stand for the benediction. We are thankful to the Lord for the generations of Esau and the things that are brought to our minds as we think upon the rejection of Esau and the reception of Jacob. And oh, Father, we do pray that the solemnity of just such a chapter as this may grip us.

And if the decision has not yet been made, that by the power and enablement of the Holy Spirit, those who do not know the Lord Jesus may flee to him who is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him. May grace, may mercy, may peace go with us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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