

A Mess of Pottage

by William MacDonald

The sermon warns against the dangers of compromising spiritual values for physical pleasure, highlighting the consequences of sacrificing one's Christian character.

Scripture: Genesis 25:29, Hebrews 12:16

Topics: "Temptation", "Value of Spiritual Heritage"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes the peril of trading lasting spiritual values for fleeting physical desires, using the story of Esau who sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. He illustrates how momentary gratification can lead to devastating consequences, as seen in the life of a believer who, in a moment of temptation, sacrifices their integrity and testimony for temporary pleasure. This exchange not only affects their relationship with God but also tarnishes their legacy and the respect of their community. MacDonald warns that such choices can lead to a lifetime of regret and calamity, echoing the biblical truth that one can lose much for the sake of immediate satisfaction.

Transcript

"Esau ... for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Hebrews 12:16

It is often possible to barter life's best values for a momentary gratification of physical appetite.

That is what Esau did. He had come in from the field tired and hungry. At that moment Jacob was cooking a pot of red bean soup. When Esau asked for a bowl of the "red stuff," Jacob said, in effect, "Sure, I'll give you some if you'll sell me your birthright in return."

Now the birthright was a valuable privilege which belonged to the oldest son in a family. It was valuable because it gave him the place of eventual headship in the family or tribe and entitled him to a double portion of the inheritance.

But at that moment, Esau considered the birthright worthless. What good is a birthright, he thought, to a man who is as famished as I? His hunger seemed so overpowering that he was willing to give almost anything to satisfy it. In order to pacify a momentary appetite, he was willing to surrender something that was of enduring value. And so he made the awful bargain!

A similar drama is being reenacted almost daily. Here is a man who has maintained a good testimony for years. He has the love of a fine family and the respect of his Christian fellowship. When he speaks, his

words carry spiritual authority, and his service has the blessing of God upon it. He is a model believer.

But then comes the moment of fierce passion. It seems as if he is being consumed by the fires of sexual temptation. All of a sudden nothing seems so important as the satisfaction of this physical drive. He abandons the power of rational thought. He is willing to sacrifice everything for this illicit alliance.

And so he takes the insane plunge! For that moment of passion, he exchanges the honor of God, his own testimony, the esteem of his family, the respect of his friends and the power of a sterling Christian character. Or as Alexander Maclaren said, "He forgets his longings after righteousness; flings away the joys of divine communion; darkens his soul; ends his prosperity; brings down upon his head for all his remaining years a cataract of calamities; and makes his name and his religion a target for the barbed sarcasms of each succeeding generation of scoffers."

In the classic words of Scripture, he sells his birthright for a mess of pottage.

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