



“Fighting The Flesh” (Hebrews 12:14-29, Part II)

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Intro: Read the passage, noting at the end what we highlighted last week. This week we look at Esau, who our text says “for a single meal sold his inheritance rights.” See Genesis 27:1-4. The blessing Isaac refers to is that which was reserved for the firstborn son. This son traditionally was to receive a much more substantial inheritance than any of the other sons. But God had prophesied about Jacob and Esau something that went against the norm (see Gen.25:23). It is amazing how prophecy works, that God can predict something and it come true, while at the same time never violating man’s free will. Based on this prophecy, Isaac should have known better than to expect the firstborn blessing to go to Esau. So why did he intend to grant him this blessing against God’s prophetic plan? See Gen.25:27-28. And so this soap opera story unfolds like this: See Gen.27:5-36 (summarize), then note verse 41. Esau is referred to as “godless, and we are encouraged to learn from his failures so that we do not miss the blessings/inheritance God has for us. Esau married out of the will of God (Refer to Gen.27:46; 28:8-9). He for years held a grudge against his brother Jacob with intentions of killing him after his father Isaac was dead. But the one most chilling statement about Esau is from our text in Hebrews 12 is this: “who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights.” One wrong decision cost him greatly. With that said, some thoughts:

Was Esau saved? Malachi 1:1-3; he is referred to in our text as “godless.” See I Tim.1:9, KJV = “profane.” He lost his inheritance for “a single meal.” Adam and Eve lost paradise over one bite of forbidden fruit; Cain became a fugitive for one act of violence; Nadab and Abihu lost their lives for one irreverent act (Lev.10:1-2); the rich young ruler forfeited heaven as a result of one bad choice (money and wealth over heavenly riches).

Note: Esau “could bring about no change of mind,” though he sought the blessing with tears. KJV says “he found no place of repentance.” ESV says “he found no place to repent.” What a sad picture, of wanting to repent and being unable to. Now this is a bit deep and mysterious, but we must come to terms with something, and that is that we cannot simply repent anytime we want. See Acts 11:18; II Tim.2:25; John 6:44.

Sometimes people sin to the point that God gives them over to their desires. See. Rom.1: 24, 26, 28.

You do not want to forfeit eternal riches as a result of giving in to sinful desires.

Even genuine Christians can make bad choices that cause them great harm in this life, and loss of reward in the one to come. King David started a string of unfortunate events in his life when

he lusted after and committed adultery with Bathsheba. Samson made one bad decision after another over the twenty years of his ministry, and he ended up blind, bound, and going around in circles (grinding in the prison, going nowhere).

What is it that causes us to make these bad decisions? See James 1:13-14. The Bible sums up our natural sinful desires by calling them (in the old KJV) “the flesh.” The NIV simply translates it “the sinful nature.” (see Rom.8:1; Gal.5:13, 17, 19, 24; 6:8). All of us are born with this sinful nature, and when one becomes a Christian the battle is on between my sinful nature and my new nature. As a Christian, I do not want to forfeit blessings in this life, bring about unnecessary pain for myself and my family, and lose reward and commendation in eternity by letting “the flesh” win the battle in my life. Sadly, the Bible is filled with stories of genuinely “saved people” who caused themselves great pain and loss by not winning the battle over the flesh (see Phil.3:18-19).

Esau gave in to his appetite for a literal physical meal. It is interesting that Satan initially tempted man with “forbidden fruit.” For Esau, a physical meal cost him his inheritance. What does this tell us? As Christians, we should live self-controlled lives in regard to our eating habits. If I can’t say no to the Hostess Twinkie, how am I going to say no to the hostess? See I Thess.4:1-8; II Peter 1:3-8; I Peter 5:8; Gal.5:23; II Tim.3:3. We’ll talk more about this a little later.

There is one physical appetite that is mentioned in our text. It concerns that three letter word – SEX. Do not be “sexually immoral” or godless like Esau. Now I always have to point out that God created sex, but sin has perverted it.

The Uniqueness of Sexual Temptation

1. A God given desire
2. Universal temptation
3. Sin against one’s own body (I Cor.6:18)
4. Extremely potent
 - Potent: powerful; persuasive
 - The same man (David) who overcame bitterness fell to sensual desire with Bathsheba; after Joseph humbly accepted his bitter circumstances in Egypt, Satan sent a woman that sought to seduce him; in Numbers 25 when the Israelites could not be defeated by powerful enemies or cursed by the best of sorcerers (Balaam), Satan’s plot was sexual seduction; Samson had repeated female relationships out of the will of God; the OT is filled with the voices of the prophets speaking out against the sexual sin that was so often prevalent among the Israelites; in the NT, the church of Corinth, though displaying all kinds of supernatural gifts of the Spirit in their worship services, were carnal, and one of the marks of their carnality was a man who was having a sexual relationship with his father’s wife (and the church was doing nothing to confront the sin!). Jude describes some men who were in God’s eyes “blemishes at your love feasts,” and they are compared with the people

of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah, who “gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.” And two of the seven churches of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 had rampant sexual immorality in their midst.

- I have over 30 years of ministry witnessed scores of people fall to this very potent temptation, and Satan has on many occasions plotted to take me down as well. A few years ago we had one of our men in the Calvary House discipleship ministry run off with a lady he met in the shuttle ministry (driving the golf carts); a former worship leader of a prominent CC on the east coast was discovered to have had an ongoing affair with a lady in the church; years ago one of the most prominent leaders in the CC movement left his wife for a younger woman. Sexual temptation has sought to take down my three boys. I pray for them every day! Read Proverbs 5:1-5, 7-12; 7:1-2, 22-27.

How to Win The Battle Against “The Flesh”

1. Flee (I Cor.6:18a)

- Joseph (Gen.39)

2. Fortify

- Fortify: Provide or equip with defensive works; strengthen or invigorate physically, mentally, or morally.
- See Gen.4:7.
- My mind (Rom.7:21-24; 8:5-8; 12:1-2; Co.3:1-4; Eph. 4:17-24; Phil.4:8); see book “What’s On Your Mind?” by Merlin Carothers.
- My body (I Thess.4:4; I Cor.9:27; Prov.25:28)
 - Say no regularly to something you really like; say yes to something regularly that you do not like.
 - Illus: have some food favorites, etc.
 - Coffee, etc.
 - Exercise! (My muscles? Determined to slim my pot belly, 100’s of crunches every day...); Show picture of me as Tarzan.
 - Now, if you’re married, you have an added advantage. Not only do you have the Holy Spirit to encourage you in these things, you have your mate. My lovely, darling, gorgeous, godly wife Wendy has reminded me on numerous occasions, how I can say no to desserts, can regularly exercise, but sometimes have been unwilling to say no to a particular freedom I enjoy (and it’s not marital bliss!). I sure do love my wife!

3. Fight Daily

- David and Bathsheba (II Sam.11:1-15)
- Note: David's one night stand robbed him of blessing for the rest of his life!

4. Find two trustworthy accountability partners (Eccl.4:12; Heb.3:12-13).

5. Don't Keep Sin Hidden

- Belt of truth, keeps your spiritual pants up; Prov.28:13.
- David's Psalms of how keeping his sin hidden affected his life.
- Samson

CONCLUSION

- I Peter 2:11
- Don't forfeit the blessing of God by giving in to the appetites of the flesh.