

3 A Three-Phase Crisis

Esau got badly treated! A chunk of it was his fault. Somewhere down the line, each of us will face what Esau faced. This crisis had three phases; The bad environment in which things were allowed to fester, and inevitably led to the crisis. Then there was the aftermath, the way each party handled the crisis.

Build-up



Crisis



Aftermath

? If we choose to live in hostility to those around us what is the outcome likely to be?

- Most crises have these three stages. We tend to pay attention to the crisis stage. We tend to neglect the buildup. Very few of this kind of crisis happen spontaneously; most are the result of a long build up where we have refused to deal with issues. When they come, we often refuse to acknowledge that the way we lived led to the crisis. We deny the link between the past and the present. Most of us probably have a crisis or two building at the moment.
What should we do about this?

If I continue this course of behaviour, what will the outcome be?

- Once the crisis has passed, we are faced with new issues. Often now we see our future as the only result of the crisis. We refuse to acknowledge that we have a choice. Moving on or being held back; forgiving or being bitter, repeating the same mistakes or learning from the past.

How do I respond in such a way as to give myself a future?

? What advice would you give to Esau about his future?
Was the door still open for him to have a future?

In the end, it was Esau's response to Jacob's actions that would control his future.

? If God had given the chances he gave to Jacob to Esau, what do you think would have happened?

At the end of this section, which character do you dislike the least? Why?

✓ At the end of the day, Jacob got the blessing. But he got it at a cost. He has alienated not only his brother but his father. He has finally broken this dysfunctional family. He has to flee for his life, and the effects of what he has done will stay with him for at least the next 25 years. In the end, Esau will do what is right and forgive him.

? Do you think he recognised the hidden costs in his actions?
Why?

What about us and our actions?

What lessons can you learn from this account?

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Jacob - Part 2 - The Blessing



The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Abraham has a remarkable relationship with God. God promised Abraham that through his descendants all nations would be blessed.

In Genesis 17:8 God says. *"The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*

In Jacob's life, this promise is being contested. Will God be the God of Jacob the way He was the God of Abraham? The themes of competition, ambition and evil natures have led us to expect the worst. And so far, except for a prophecy, that Esau will serve Jacob, we have seen no indication whatsoever that God will be Jacob's God. Right now Jacob is Jacob's god! This part of Genesis is almost a testimony. The story of how God became Jacob's God.



Read Genesis 27:1-17

What does Isaac tell Esau to do?

What provokes this?

Why does Isaac intend to bless Esau rather than Jacob, as the prophecy indicates?

Isaac is convinced he is going to die! In fact, he is still alive 20 years later when Jacob returns from Paddan Aram. (cf 25:32) In Isaac's defence, it is possible (although unlikely) that he did not know of the prophecy or that he interpreted it differently from the way we read it (the Hebrew is not quite as clear as the English translation.) But it looks like he is just indulging his favouritism.

What does this passage tell us about Isaac?



Esau's Hittite wives.

Early expectation of death.

Passion for food.

Neglect of the prophecy.



Who orchestrates the deception?

In modern preaching, Jacob gets the blame for this, but it was actually Rebekah! (It has been noted that while there are many accounts of deception in Genesis, women seem to be more successful at it than men!)



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**What is motivating her; the prophecy or her own favouritism?
What do we learn about Rebekah in this account?**



**Why do you think Jacob went along with the rouse?
Do you think his motives were spiritual or selfish?
What were the dangers in this deception? v12
Why is Isaac so easily deceived?**

Just as Esau is 'deceived' by a meal – Isaac is 'deceived' by a meal.



This is no simple deception, it requires wearing goat skin and Esau's clothes. It includes cooking the goat in such a way as to make it seem like game. Jacob has to lie directly to Isaac. It includes taking advantage of an old man whose senses are failing. This puts Jacob at odds with the law, where honouring a parent brought blessing; here Jacob seeks to obtain a blessing by dishonouring his parent.



Read Genesis 27:18-29

Esau despises his birthright, but everyone in this account takes the blessing very seriously. The birthright was physical, the blessing spiritual. Effectively, it was the passing on of the promises. It indicated stranding before God and identified the line through which God would work. The blessing and election go together. It is perhaps for this reason that Isaac has only one blessing.

How seriously do we take God's blessing?



No reference is made in the passage to the prophecy of Genesis 25:23 until Isaac blesses his son, the second part of which sounds like the original promise. However, the first part of the blessing makes it clear that Isaac believes Esau should be the one blessed.

What does this tell us about Isaac?



**God promises the blessing to Jacob.
Does that justify Jacob and Rebekah's actions?
If you have to do something evil to bring about God's will, is it good?
Does the end justify the means?
Does God's promise allow us to override issues of righteousness and justice?
What should Rebekah and Jacob have done?
Why didn't they do this?
Can you think of a modern-day setting where we might face this kind of issue?**

It is really dangerous to try to make God's will happen our way. At the same time, you have to be careful that you don't just sit around and expect God to do everything for you.



**How will you know the difference?
What danger could you face if you try to make God's will happen your way?**

God always intended Jacob to get the blessing and even though Jacob stole the blessing, God still honoured it.



**Do you think this was God's plan that it worked out this way?
Do you believe there is still power in blessing today?**



Read Genesis 27:30-46

This is one of the saddest passages in the Scripture. It is tragic that Isaac has only one blessing.



**What happens?
What would you do if this were you?
To what extent can the reality of our faith be judged by how we treat other people?**



**Did Jacob steal Esau's birthright?
What do you make of the blessing Isaac finally gives Esau?
Why the tears? What does it tell us about Esau?
Did Esau have the right to blame Jacob for his loss?**

In a sense, he did, but he was also part of the bad environment that allowed this mess to happen.

No one comes out of this account well. The parents are as bad as the children.



**What does Esau plan to do?
When?
What does Rebekah plan?
Is she still acting deceitfully?**



The Bitter Root

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done. Hebrews 12:15-17



The older version of the bible says that he “found no place for repentance.” This has been interpreted to mean that Esau could not be forgiven for his spiritual failing. The TNIV quoted above is a good translation. It is not about forgiveness of sins, it is simply that Esau could not undo what was done; it was irreversible. **Did God bless Esau?** Hebrews 11:20



**In what way was Esau sexually immoral?
In what way was he godless?
Why could he not undo what was done? Can we?**

Often, our sin does have consequences that we cannot change. Sometimes we have to live with our mistakes. It is amazing how often God mitigates our sins.

What do you think the bitter root was?



The Judaism of Jesus' day considered sexual immorality and godlessness to be the same thing. All Gentiles were of suspect sexual morals. But it could be his two wives that were the problem. Maybe the bitter root was that sin, or maybe it was the unforgiveness that plagued his life.



**What bitter roots could spring up in our lives?
How should we handle injustice?
What instruction does scripture give us for these occasions?
How should we react when God blesses someone else?**

We can be grateful that our father does not only have one blessing to give.