

Trading Away The Promises

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[0:00] Well, please take your Bibles and open them up to the book of Genesis. It feels good to say that after a long break from the book of Genesis. We are back. It's our usual practice to preach through books of the Bible.

We took a little break for Advent and then there at the beginning of the year. But we're back in Genesis, working our way through this incredible and glorious first book of the Bible. So if you don't have a copy of God's Word with you, if you didn't bring one, that's okay. We provide those for you in the seat back nearby. You can find our passage all the way back on page 18 of that Pew Bible.

So if you'd like to use that, please feel free to do so. Our passage this morning is Genesis chapter 25, verses 24 through 34. And so when you found that, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word.

Genesis 25, verses 24 through 34. Speaking of Rebekah, it says, When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb.

[1:10] The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak. So they called his name Esau. Afterward, his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel. So his name was called Jacob.

Isaac was 60 years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.

Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field and he was exhausted.

And Esau said to Jacob, Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted. Therefore his name was called Edom. Jacob said, Sell me your birthright now.

Esau said, I'm about to die of what use is a birthright to me. Jacob said, Swear to me now. So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way.

[2:15] Thus Esau despised his birthright. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God endures forever.

Would you pray with me once more? Lord, we pray now as we return back to the book of Genesis. God, as we open up your word this morning, we pray once more. Would you speak through the preaching of your word?

Would you remind us of the glories of the promises you've made to us in Christ? And would you teach us not to forsake them, to trade them away for fleeting pleasures of this world?

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You can be seated. Our boys, like a lot of boys their age, love Legos.

They have probably more than what's reasonable for anybody to have. They collect them and get them for birthdays, special occasions, for Christmas. They enjoy putting them together and then tearing them apart, putting them together and playing with them.

[3:15] And unfortunately, they also like to trade them. And I say unfortunately because, as you probably know, children are not great evaluators of value.

They're not very good at making good, fair trades. And on the one hand, it's happened before where one brother will take advantage of another. And they will capitalize on this obvious desire for a coveted peace.

And they'll force them into this bad exchange. Or on the other hand, time will go by and everybody will forget that the trade was made in the first place. And so we're arguing over whose peace belongs to who.

Or time will go by and someone will inevitably regret the trade that they made. They will wish that they had never done this. And so my advice to them constantly in our house, over and over and over again, is do not trade away your stuff.

Now you didn't buy this. You didn't work for it. All of this was given freely to you. This is for you to enjoy. Don't let your desires rule over you in such a way that you would trade away a wonderful blessing and eventually come to regret it.

[4:25] Well, apparently I'm fighting a losing battle. Because as we see in our passage here this morning, this apparently is a universal problem. This morning we have this story here of one brother taking advantage of another brother.

And one brother, on the other hand, making this incredibly foolish exchange. He trades his birthright in for just one single bowl of soup. And there's a very clear and obvious lesson here for us this morning.

And it's this. It's the same advice that I give to my kids. It's don't trade away the blessings of God for worthless things. Don't let your desires rule over you.

Don't make an exchange that you will later eventually come to regret. So, let's take a look at our passage this morning. And we're going to take it in two parts here.

This will be our outline if you're taking notes. Just two parts here. First, we see the wisdom of God. And second, we see the foolishness of man. The wisdom of God and the foolishness of man.

[5:34] So first, let's consider the wisdom of God. And since it's been a little while, I do want to remind us just very quickly here of some of the main themes that we've seen so far in Genesis.

You know, one of the things that keeps coming up time and time and time again, over and over and over again in the book of Genesis, is this truth that our God is sovereign over all things.

The God that we worship, the God that's presented to us here in the book of Genesis, is in complete control of everything that happens in His creation. He is the creator, He is the ruler, and He is the king.

And we've seen also another theme, that our God has good plans and purposes for His creation. He's ruling and He's reigning over all things, not aimlessly and not randomly, but He's moving and directing all things for a purpose.

All things are moving towards a certain defined future. All of human history, in other words, is the unfolding of the sovereign, wise plan of God.

[6:41] Now, we've seen this all the way back to the Garden of Eden. If you remember, Genesis chapter 3, He promised all the way back in the Garden of Eden, His plan that He will send the seed of the woman to crush the head of the serpent.

You remember this promise? He's promised that His plan is to magnify His glory in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's God's eternal plan. Genesis is eager to show us that our sovereign God is working out all things according to His wise purposes.

His plan, His promise, is that He is going to put an end to the curse of sin. He is going to crush the head of the serpent. He is going to undo the effects of the curse.

He is going to triumph over death. And the way He's going to do it is He's going to send the seed of the woman who we know is the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the big picture here.

And we need to keep that big picture in mind here because we're zooming in again. We're getting into the details. We're zooming in once more on just one family and the birth of these twin brothers here in Genesis 25.

[7:53] What we need to understand is that all of this is the unfolding of the wise plan of God. Look there with me to verse 24. Sometimes you might have siblings that as they grow up, people say things like, I can hardly tell you two apart.

Sometimes our boys hear comments like that. That is not the case here with Jacob and Esau, is it? In fact, it's hard to imagine two more different individuals. In God's design, these two children from

the very beginning, they come out of the womb just absolutely distinct from one another. They are polar opposites. For one thing, verse 25, they look different. Verse 25 says, Esau comes out red and hairy.

It's like he's wearing a hairy cloak. And so they called his name Esau. And eventually, the descendants of Esau, you probably know, are called Edom, the Edomites, which means red. And you may know that the place where they live is called Mount Seir, which means hairy. And so there you go. They are the red people from the hairy mountain. And this is their origin story here in Genesis 25.

[9:06] Jacob, on the other hand, we're told later on, he had smooth skin. He's gentle and he's soft. He's very delicate. So they look different.

That's one thing. Not only this, but we're also told that these two brothers have different personalities. Verse 26 says, Jacob, he comes out with his hand grasping, holding Esau's heel. And so his name was called Jacob, which in the Hebrew, it sounds a lot like the Hebrew word for heel. But it also, we should know, it has this sort of double meaning, this layered meaning, where it's telling us that Jacob is a trickster.

And he's a cheat. And from the beginning, God is showing us. He's setting the stage here for how things are going to go with these two brothers. Jacob is going to trick and to cheat his way into the blessing.

On the other hand, Esau, verse 27, says Esau was a skillful hunter. He's a man of the field. And Jacob's a quiet man, dwelling in tents. You see the difference in personality here.

[10:11] And verse 28 says, Isaac, the dad, loves Esau because he gets to eat all that good game that he cooks and that he catches. And Rebecca loves Jacob. So on the one hand, you have Esau.

He's this red and hairy and burly man's man, right? He's a hunter and he's a gatherer. He's rough and tumble. He's a dad's boy.

And Jacob, on the other hand, he's a fan of the great indoors. He likes to stay inside and to cook and to hang out with mom. He wants to sit in and sip a cup of tea and work on a puzzle while Esau wants to go out and blast some music and blow something up.

Now, you can see the difference in their personalities here. And it's amazing to me. Parents, you can relate to this, I'm sure. And sometimes you look at some of your kids and you wonder, how in the world did y'all come out of the same place?

They just have totally different personalities, totally different interests. And their life just takes these totally different paths. They are distinct in every way. But, of course, we know as believers, right, that again, zooming out, all of this is in God's wise design.

[11:22] We believe that a sovereign and wise God has crafted each one of us individually. That he knows you, that he formed you, that he shaped you, that he knit our children together in our mother's womb.

He has plans and purposes for each one of them. All of this is within his wise and sovereign plan. But there's another big picture issue at play here.

And here's what we need to understand. That these two children serve two very different purposes in the wise plan of God.

Look there to verse 23. Verse 23, the Lord says to Rebecca, Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples from within you shall be divided.

The one shall be stronger than the other. And the older shall serve the younger. It's like we get an advanced copy of the script here, isn't it?

[12:20] And then in the verses and the pages that follow, we get to see this plan unfold. We get to see God's plan play out. In God's wisdom, we're told here, clearly, these two children will become two nations.

They will war against each other. And God's told us exactly how this is going to work out. The older will serve the younger. So in God's wisdom, these two children have two very different futures.

They have different purposes in the sovereign and wise plan of God. Would you just think for just a minute with me about what this says about our God? God has determined well in advance, here's how Christ will come.

Here's how my plan of redemption will unfold. Here's how I will bless the world. Here's how I will fulfill my promises to Abraham. It won't be through Esau.

It will be through Jacob. It is the younger, through him, that the promised Messiah will come. He will have the place of primacy. What does this say about our God? It shows us, again, our God is wise and sovereign.

[13:34] If he has a wise plan of salvation, and praise God, he is capable and powerful to bring it to pass. He is able to accomplish his plan.

It shows us our God is deeply engaged and actively at work in every detail of life in his creation. And he will accomplish all his purposes. Oh, what a comfort it is to know, church, that our wise and sovereign God is at all times working out his good plan.

Isn't it a comfort to know? All things go as he plans. And we can have confidence, whatever happens even in our day, whatever happens in our life, whatever headlines we read on the newspaper, whatever world event is shaking the world around us, that all things go as God plans. Even more specifically, in our own life, get more specific, our God is in complete control over all the events of your life, down to the finest details, the hairiness of your arms, the tint of your skin, the softness of your hands.

All of it is within this overarching banner of God's goodness, God's wisdom, God's sovereignty. We worship a God who reigns and rules over all things, who has a good plan for his world.

[15:01] Listen to what he says in Isaiah 46. He tells us in Isaiah 46, I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.

Sometimes, sometimes, we can look and see in scripture like we can right here with these two children, and we can have this advanced script of what's revealed about God's plans, but more often, we don't have that advantage, do we?

We don't know exactly, down to the finest details, what God's plan is for our life. I wish we did. Don't you wish you did? I wish that we knew for my children exactly what God has planned for them, what the paths are that he has established for them.

We don't always know the fine details, do we? What we do know is that God is good, and God is sovereign, and God is wise, that his promises are sure, and that his faithfulness is worthy of our trust.

How ought we respond to these things? Well, friend, we can live with confidence that even when we don't know the fine details, guess what? He does. And we can rest in his faithfulness to his promises, and then we can strive to live faithfully to him while we wait on him to fulfill what he's promised, all that he's said that he'll do.

[16:42] This is what Jacob and Esau should have done. But instead, look there with me starting in verse 29, and we see here second, we see the foolishness of man.

We'll spend most of our time here talking about Esau, okay? But I want to start here first with Jacob because neither of these boys come out looking very good, do they? Verse 29 starts the story.

It tells us that these two boys were doing what they do. Jacob was inside cooking some stew, and Esau is out in the field, and then look what happens. Esau comes in, and he is exhausted, and he is worn out.

And Esau says to Jacob, let me eat some of that red stew. I'm exhausted. And literally, it can read something closer to, let me gulp down some of that red stuff.

Let me stuff myself with that red stuff that you're cooking. And Jacob, the trickster, is ready to take advantage. Verse 31 says, Jacob is ready, and he says, sell me your birthright now.

[17:51] Well, his birthright, of course, belongs to Esau. Naturally, he is the firstborn, and so naturally, by natural order, he is the heir.

But we need to understand, and we need to remember, that this is more than just a normal inheritance, isn't it? By nature, by virtue of being the firstborn, all of the promises of God, that God has made to Abraham, and made to Isaac, all of these promises would be, and should be, Esau's by birthright.

But verse 32, Esau says, I'm about to die, of what use is a birthright to me? So Jacob, again, the trickster, says, swear to me now.

So he swore to him, and sold his birthright, to Jacob. Then Jacob, gives Esau the bread, and the lentil stew, he eats, he drinks, he gets up, he goes his way, and thus, Esau despised, his birthright. Let's start here with Jacob. Jacob grabs, and tricks his way, into God's blessing. And you might think, well, what's wrong with that? Shouldn't he want the blessing of God?

[19:05] Well, what's wrong is, doesn't he realize, that if God has spoken, and God has promised, we don't have to weasel our way, into the promises of God? How much better would it have been, for him to wait on the Lord, instead of taking matters, into his own hands?

He's no better than Abraham, is he? God promised Abraham an heir, and what does Abraham do? He takes matters, into his own hands, and goes off with Hagar, to try to produce, the promises of God, by his own human effort.

We should know by now, church, no man can bring about, the promises of God, by his own effort. That's Jacob. But Esau, here, I think, has the greater offense.

Esau, verse 34, says, Esau, despised, his birthright. Esau, trades, in the blessing, for a single bowl, of soup.

Can you imagine, anything, this foolish? He comes in starving, he's willing to do anything, and he, he exchanges, in this moment, all the glories, and privileges, and blessings, of God, for one, slurp, of red, lentil, soup.

[20:24] How could he be so foolish? Before you say it, because I know you're probably, thinking it, if God has already determined, this is how, it's going to go, God already gave us, the advanced script, right?

God already told us, that this is what's going to happen, we can't be too hard, on Esau, right? God made him do it, right? Wrong. And if that's how, you think about God's sovereignty, you will open up the door, for all kinds of foolishness, in your own life.

The Bible tells us two truths, very clearly, and sometimes they're hard, to hold it together, but we have to hold them together, because God's word, holds them together, these two truths, that God is sovereign, and we are responsible.

At the very same time, God is, yes, totally sovereign, over all things, in his creation, yes, he has a plan, for his world, down to the very finest, details of our life, even including, our own choices, and at the same time, we are responsible, for our choices, and we are responsible, for our sinful actions, and God is never, to blame for our sin.

You might think of Peter's sermon, in the book of Acts, he looks out at the, the crowds, and says in Acts chapter 2, he says, this Jesus, delivered up, according to the definite plan, and foreknowledge of God, you crucified.

[21:51] That's sovereignty, and that's, responsibility. While I'm at it, let me correct another, impulse of ours, for another thing, you might be tempted, to read this account, and hear, this obviously, foolish decision, and say, I would never do, what Esau did.

Why in the world, would Esau trade, in the glories of God, for a bowl of soup? I mean, how foolish, can you be? Why in the world, how could Adam and Eve, trade in paradise, for just one chomp, of the apple?

Right? How in the world, could the crowds, beg for Barabbas, to be released, and then to crucify Jesus? I would never do that. Yes, you, would.

When the Bible shows us, obvious foolishness, like this, we don't need to dismiss it, as a mistake, that somebody else would do, and not us. When the Bible shows us, this obvious foolishness, it is a mirror, to our own hearts.

We need to understand, that we are all, capable of doing, this very same thing. Paul tells us in Romans, he says that, idolaters, they exchange the glory, of the immortal God, for images, resembling mortal man, and birds, and animals, and creeping things.

[23:14] They exchange, the truth of God, for a lie. They worship, and serve the creature, rather than the creator. And we all nod our heads, and say, that's wrong, I agree. And he turns and says, and all of us, are guilty of it.

All have sinned. All have fallen short, of the glory of God. And the essence, of sin, is this foolish exchange.

In our sin, we exchange, God's glory, God's blessing, God's promises, God's truth, for empty, unsatisfying, unfulfilling, temporary pleasures.

Every one of us, is prone to do this. Every one of us, is prone to, give away, eternal blessings, for temporary, blessings. Every single one of us, like Esau, is prone, inclined, by the sin of our heart, to trade in, true, eternal satisfaction, for temporary, satisfaction.

We are all prone, to give in, to the demands, of our appetites, despise the promises, of God. We just say, we're prone to wonder, Lord I feel it.

[24:34] Prone to leave, the God I love. That's us. Do you, do you believe, that that's you? Do you believe, that you're capable, of making, such a foolish exchange?

Let me ask it like this. Do you, really know, the power, of your appetites? We all have, appetites, that's not necessarily, a bad thing, right?

We were created, with different appetites. We're created, with desires, and some are, stronger than others. Sometimes it varies, from person to person. We have different, personalities, we have, have different, wirings, but we all have, appetites.

But, let me ask you like this. Do you, rule over, your appetites? Or, do your appetites, rule over, you? When our, good, God-given appetites, rule us, that's when they become, a danger to us. And that's when they, they can lead us, into all sorts of foolishness. I know, that you've seen this happen, time and time, and time again, haven't you? In your own life, and also in the lives, of others around us. This is the husband, and the father, with a sexual appetite, who trades in, a long marriage, and a happy family, to go and satisfy, that appetite, with someone else.

[25:57] This is the foolishness, of a woman, who craves, affirmation, and attention so much, that she just lives, her life online, and her real life, around her, just crumbles, and falls apart.

This is the, Christian employee, who, desires success, and has an appetite, for money so much, that they make sure, to make no mention, of Christ at work.

There's no discernible, difference between them, and anybody else, because that's how, you climb up the ladder. This is the young, Christian who, knows better, but, just can't stop himself, from looking at pornography, just for a quick hit, of temporary pleasure.

Or, it's the person, who once, called themselves, a Christian, but now, no longer walks, with the Lord.

Do you know anybody, like that? I do. I want to be clear, of course, that we, we believe, in the perseverance, of the saints, in this church.

[27:03] And we believe, that if you are, genuinely, a Christian, that if you are, are born again, of the spirit, you can never be, unborn again. That's impossible. If you are, truly regenerate, you can never, be lost.

You are safe, in the Father's hand. And at the same time, we believe, there is such a thing, as a false, profession, of faith. We believe, there is such a thing, as seeds, that grow up quickly, but wither away.

If you are able, just quickly, I want to invite you, to turn to Hebrews chapter 12. And this is the passage, that was read earlier, this morning, Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12.

Because the author, of Hebrews, he talks about, this very thing. And he warns us, against behaving, like Esau. Look there with me, Hebrews chapter 12.

He says, see to it, that no one fails, to obtain the grace of God. That no root of bitterness, springs up, and causes trouble, and by it, many become defiled.

[28:12] See to it, that no one is sexually immoral, or unholy, like Esau, who sold his birthright, for a single meal. I don't know, exactly why, some people, leave the faith, that they once professed.

But Hebrews, gives us a couple of reasons, to watch out for, doesn't it? For some, it could be a root, of bitterness. Whether, it's from a bad experience, maybe it's from bad leadership, maybe it's, it's mean people in the church, maybe it's fake people, in the church.

Maybe it's bitterness, from unmet expectations. You thought that, that following the Lord, would make your life easy, and now life is hard, and so what good is God? Whatever it may be, we're told to watch out, for a root, of bitterness.

See to it, that no one, fails to obtain, the grace of God, that no root, of bitterness, springs up among you church. Or, for some, it could be, sexual immorality, unholiness.

I mean, my goodness, how many, how many, have left the faith, that they once proclaimed, and you, you peel back the layers, and the reasons why, and, and down at the center of it, at the root of it, is a sexual desire, that they ultimately, value more, than all the promises of God.

[29:38] How many, especially in our, day and age, have, have broadened, their understanding, of the faith, so much, that it's barely, recognizable, because someone, that they love, and someone, that they know, has embraced, some form of sexual sin, and they don't want, to appear, unaffirming.

We are warned, here, church, see to it, that no one, is like, Esau, who sold, his birthright, all the promises, of God, for a single, meal, for he says, in verse 17, for you know, that afterward, when he desired, to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found, no chance to repent, though he sought it, with tears.

The bad news is, for Esau, this rejection, was final. The deal was sealed, and he could not, get that blessing, back from the hands, of Jacob, although it says, that he sought it, with tears, but the good news, for us, the good news, for you, wandering sinner, the good news, for you, weak Christian, the good news, for you, Christian, with the secret sin, that hasn't been brought, to the light, we live, in a window, of God's patience, with sinners, like us, and we live here, with an opportunity, to repent, of our sin, and the promise, of God, that all, who turn, from their sin, and put their faith, in Christ, will be, washed, clean, of all their sin, will be, forgiven, of all their foolishness, will be made, new, and adopted, as sons, and daughters, of God, don't make, the foolish decision, of leaving here, without repenting, of your sin, and putting your faith, in Christ, don't be like,

Esau, the good news, of the gospel, is that, Christ has come, for sinners, just like, us, he will receive, the adulterers, and the addicts, and the abusers, the worst of the worst, any, who turn, and put their faith, in Christ, see to it, church, see to it, the question, then becomes, how do we, see to it, that no one, fails to obtain, the grace of God, how do we guard, against our own appetites, ruling over us, and how do we, look to our left, to our right, to our brothers, and sisters in Christ, and guard against this, for one another, how do we do this, there is one way, we must, satisfy our souls, in the goodness, of God, the only solution, to our fleshly appetites, driving us, into all sorts, of foolishness, and ultimately, driving us, away from the Lord, is to make certain, that we are, satisfying our, spiritual appetite, with the glory, of God, the Christian life, is not just, deny yourself, although that's key, right, deny yourself, it is also, fill yourself, it's a call, to satisfy your soul, in him, and to, to feast on his goodness, and, and to cling to his promises, it's receiving something, that's infinitely greater, and, and infinitely, more satisfying, than anything, this world has to offer, the reason, why this, type of exchange, is so foolish, is not only, because what we gain, is ultimately, so worthless, but because what we give up, is so worthy, this good, and sovereign, and wise, and holy God, is enough, to satisfy, the deepest, longings, of your soul, and we were made, to be satisfied, in him, are you trading him, in for anything, this morning, are you aware, of your appetites, and what they, might lead you to do, apart from the grace of God, are you, are you seeking, to satisfy your soul, in the glory of God, each and every day,

I want to leave you, this morning, with just a couple of quotes, one from A.W. Tozer, and one from C.S. Lewis, I'll do Lewis first, he says in his work, *The Weight of Glory*, he says, it would seem, that our Lord, finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak, we are half-hearted creatures, fooling about, with drink, and sex, and ambition, when infinite joy, is offered to us, like an ignorant child, who wants to go on, making mud pies, in the slums, because he can't imagine, what's meant, by the offer, of a holiday, at the sea, we are far too, easily pleased, and Tozer, says the man, who has God, for his treasure, has all things, in one, many ordinary treasures, may be denied him, or if he is allowed, to have them, the enjoyment of them, will be so tempered, that they will never, be necessary, to his happiness, or if he must see them go, one after one, he will scarcely feel, a sense of loss, for having the source, of all things, he has in one, all satisfaction, all pleasure, all delight, and whatever he may lose, he has actually lost nothing, for he now has it, all in one, and he has it purely, legitimately, and forever, do you have that, in the Lord, church we must see, to it that none of us, behave like Esau, would you see to it, for yourself, and would you see to it, for one another, would you see to it, that we are satisfied, in Christ,

[35:39] Father, we believe, that you are, infinitely, and truly, satisfying, that in your, presence there is, fullness of joy, at your right hand, are pleasures, forevermore, and we confess, that each one of us, from time to time, if not constantly, has traded this in, for fleeting pleasures, of this world, God would you, curb our appetite, for sin, and fill us, fill us, and satisfy us, with your goodness, we pray in Jesus name, Amen.