

“Birthright”

By Kirk Orelup

Sunday, January 31st, 2016

As you know, last week, Jesse brought the message on the birthright, and I have actually been asked to talk more about that topic. I am thankful that he was so thorough and went over as much as he did. That means that I only have to go over some specifics. How’s it going so far, these sermons this morning? Sermonettes. Sermonette doesn’t mean ‘Bible-light,’ does it?

“Birthright,” it’s synonymous with another word that we see in the Bible, sometimes: “eldest.” It implies a right of birth, essentially. In other words, there was special recognition to the eldest son that no other son would receive. The word “birthright” stems from another word that means, “to open the womb.”

The eldest son, who opened the womb, would be entitled to four different things, okay?

1. Become the priest (spiritual head) of the family after his father.
2. To inherit his father's dominion and power, as a prince who becomes king, or, as Jesus, when He was resurrected, he said, “**All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth.**”
3. To receive a double portion of his father's possessions, if he has other brothers because he would have to share with them.
4. To receive the greater blessing of his father. The blessings of the father carried a great deal of weight back then, as opposed to now, when we run over those things without much regard.

However, it is possible, as we learned, to lose one’s birthright, either by sinning against the father or by giving it up or selling it. You will recall from last week’s message that Esau was the rightful recipient of the birthright, but in a moment of weakness, he sold his birthright to his younger brother Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup. Actually, the soup also came with a side of bread. I don’t know if you’re familiar with that, but it says so (Genesis 25:34). Bread and soup, it's like going to Panera, and they ask you, “Do you want chips, an apple, or bread?” How many of you choose the bread? Don't worry: that doesn't have anything to do with your spirituality.

I want to highlight the bread because you will see that it is a recurring theme. We’ll probably cover more of it, so...

Anyway, Esau sold his birthright. What Esau didn't realize is that this would go down in history as the most expensive bowl of beans ever sold.

The only time that the word, ‘birthright’ is mentioned in the New Testament is in reference to Esau. Jesse read the verses, Hebrews 12:14-17, last week, so we are just going to focus on one verse, 16.

Hebrews 12:16 *Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.*

That also says, for one meal, if you look at the translation. Reuben is another person who lost his birthright. We don’t talk much about Reuben, but he lost it because he, basically, slept with his father's concubine, Jacob’s concubine. Jacob, who we just talked about received this birthright as the younger son, his eldest son, he skipped him because of his sin. So, little mention, though, is made of Reuben. So, why is all the focus on Esau, when Reuben went in and committed adultery, essentially, and he’s not really mentioned, but, Esau, who got a meal, he’s the one that we’re all bashing? Doesn’t that seem odd? He ate some food, and we’re all jumping on his case, right?

So, it's not Reuben but Esau who is called a profane person, and it is made clear that it is for selling his birthright for that one meal. The term "profane person" comes from two words—I like to see what these words mean, sometimes, and sometimes it gives us a little insight—it's two words that together mean "to walk across the threshold." The threshold represents the way in or out of our covenant with God. You may recall that Jesse mentioned that there is much to be learned about being born again and our birthright when we examine covenants. So, here you go.

The writer of Hebrews is referring, of course, to the Exodus from Egypt. On the night before Israel was delivered, God commanded the Jews and Egyptians, or Jews and Gentiles alike, to place the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their house. As long as they did this and remained inside the threshold of the house, they were to be spared when God sent his death angel to pass over. Likewise, when we are baptized into Christ, we enter into our covenant with God.

Furthermore, if any Jews or Egyptians walked out of the house, across the threshold—or, to become a profane person, as it translates—the death angel would kill their firstborn. What word did we learn is synonymous with firstborn? Birthright. So, if we step out of our covenant, what dies? Our birthright. Same thing. If we step out of our covenant with God, our birthright also dies.

So, to get a better understanding of Esau's sin, and why it is so great, we will compare Esau to somebody else.

Like Esau, Jesus was also hungry once.

You recall that He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, and afterwards He was an hungered. The word, 'hungered,' we don't use that very often, it means, "to be famished, to crave ardently, to seek with eager desire." So, Esau only spent one day without food, laboring in the field. Now, Jesus spent forty days and forty nights, He was hungry; He was an hungered. Food was what Jesus' body craved because he needed it to live. It's a little different, much more than Esau who, it says, was faint. Jesus was beyond what doctors would consider the point of death because people are not expected to live for 40 days without food.

Food is not what we really think of, though, when we think of temptation. So, let's be real; we think of sex, alcohol, riotous living, you know, those things are what we think of. We think of Reuben and his sin. But these temptations, they're not even on the map. We're not even considering those things. We're just talking about this meal. Okay? To tempt Jesus with these other things would have been too easy to pass up. Why? because He didn't need them. They're choices. We can say, "I'd like to go this way or that," we'd like to have that; it's appealing to the flesh. But the example is that this is essential; we have to have it. The devil met Jesus right there with what it means to be human. It is the most natural desire of the body to eat. In fact, we simply cannot live without it

Jesus passed his temptation when he told Satan that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Esau, however, did not pass his test. In fact, Esau is the example of the one who lost the perspective of reality. The Bible says that he was faint, but Esau, his own words, says, "I am about to die. What good is this birthright to me?" So, the perspective had changed. He, who was sitting there in a spot where he was just feeling weak, instead, he gave up it all. And that was the point. As Jesse mentioned last week, "Don't let a temporary situation become a permanent loss."

Perhaps this is what Paul was thinking of when he wrote "And let us not be weary in well doing..." The word, 'faint,' when he says, "I am about to faint, if you translate that word, it means weary. And Paul says, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." And Paul's word, 'faint' means to relax. Esau said he was about to die. The Bible says he was faint. So, now we know that he would not feel faint if he didn't relax. Jesus, on the other hand, kept fighting. Because he did, he overcame the temptation to follow his flesh and then the angels came and ministered to him.

This is important because many think that their own birthright is secured just because they entered the covenant of baptism and are not murderers, they're not adulterers, they're not drunkards,

and they're not thieves. Okay? But neither Esau nor Jesus were tempted in those same things. Okay? They were tempted to follow the natural instincts of the flesh. Jesus did not yield because He knew that His body had to die before His glory could be received. Esau let down his guard, served his immediate physical needs at the cost of his eternal reward, and so it is said that he despised his birthright. Had he regarded his birthright, he would have known that God would have not let him die but would have come and ministered to him, just as He did to Jesus.

To stay in our covenant, we must rely on God for all of our needs, our physical and our spiritual. Faith, of course, means to trust God, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. So, any way that were not trusting God, or relying on God, it is sin. Isn't faith what allowed Abraham to receive God's covenant in the first place?

Esau's birthright—what he gave up—was to receive the blessing that God given to Abraham, that went through Isaac, and would have gone to Esau. And that blessing was fulfilled through Christ. Christ is the heir of His Father's glory. Speaking of the body, Esau gave up the blessing of God's glory because he regarded his immediate, temporary physical needs more than the eternal presence of God's glory. That's really what the message of giving up your birthright is about; it's *live*. We've got to think about are we living for our immediate temporary needs? We can go to church and we can be "good Christians" in the sense of the physical, but when it comes down to what we need for ourselves, and we find ourselves in lack, how do we answer that need? Do we go out and try to find it for ourselves? Do we fend for ourselves, do we provide for ourselves?

Psalm 42:1 *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

And Jesus, you recall, said, "**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**" (Matthew 5:6)

To be the firstborn, we must first die. If we want to keep the birthright, we must stay dead.

So, let's look at another covenant example, the one between Jonathan and David. Jonathan was a prince, the son of King Saul. It was his birthright to be heir to all of his father's kingdom, his land, his armies, his subjects, everything he had.

David was the youngest, so he was not entitled to a birthright, of Jesse, an old man in Israel of whom nothing notable is mentioned.

While Jonathan led victories in his father's name, David watched sheep in his father's name. You see the difference between the two. But Jonathan made a covenant with David. When he did, he gave David his royal robe and his armor, including his sword, bow and belt, basically saying, my honor is your honor, my defense is your defense, your enemies are my enemies, my strength is your strength. That was his covenant.

Christ fulfilled this covenant when He gave His life for us at Calvary, for He put off His heavenly robe and robed Himself in flesh. He gave up His defense, His power, His glory, and He took on our sins and our weaknesses. After he conquered sin and death, He said, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you," and He left us with the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. With this, now, with the Spirit of God inside us, we receive His power, His might, His provisions, His strength, His robe of righteousness, and much, much more to come.

But, like Esau, many of us are too busy caring for our own needs to receive God's care for us. When we live by our own power, might, provisions, strength, and so forth, only turning to God when we are without recourse, isn't this the same as giving up our birthright?

Furthermore, we hang on to baggage that we need to get rid of. We don't go beyond the pains and fears of our past because we don't yield our past to Christ. We don't overcome our anxiety for our future because we don't rest in the promise of God as our provider or our Sabbath. We don't have joy in

our present day because we are too busy qualifying ourselves to be worthy of his favor, seeking to earn our own salvation by our own merit rather than laying down our lives so that He can live in us. This is not the birthright that He intended for us.

Let's break down what Paul says to us in Galatians 2:17-21.

Galatians 2:17 *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*

I think that would be like saying, if Damien was in school, and he kept getting beaten up by all these kids, and Maxx was his friend, and Maxx happened to be on the varsity football team, and 50 pounds heavier than everybody else in school, and he says "Hey, Damien, if these guys come around, call on me and I will take care of them for you." The guys come around again, and Damien says, "I think I can do this on my own," and get beaten up, does that make Maxx a bad friend? God forbid. All right.

Galatians 2:18 *For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.*

Basically, it says, if we keep living the old life of living for ourselves and relying on ourselves, we are not placing our faith in God, and we are sinners. Okay?

Galatians 2:19 *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

Because Christ died as my substitute, we are legally dead, and we remain dead as long as we live for Christ.

Galatians 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Applying this to today's message, it says, "I am dead because I entered into his covenant; therefore I am living in His blessing of my birthright."

Galatians 2:21 *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

If I continue to try to earn my own salvation by my own merit, then Christ, the firstborn, my birthright, is of no profit to me, and that's where we lose it.

People often think that they lack faith, but, I think many times, people simply have too much pride. For instance, our past is not too painful for Christ. He has already suffered far more to prove his ability to handle all that we face. We all know that we are broken and shameful and poor, but we keep working to cover up our faults, to fix ourselves, to prove ourselves, and this is a great pride that steps us over the threshold, outside the covenant.

When we realize this and truly die to self, then this is when being born again happens—dying to self so that we can be born—when we die so that He might live. As long as we keep fighting for ourselves, He cannot fight for us. Instead, we should suffer ourselves to be defrauded, so that they can say something against us, to ridicule us, to be disdained, because when we do, we allow Christ to be our defender, our honor, our Savior. When we allow him to be our God, his glory shines through us and the blessing of His glory becomes our double portion.

This is really the part of the message about what it means, what I'm trying to say today about being born again, and having our birthright. It is our privilege. Don't give it up!