

## THE MARKS OF A PROFANE MAN

*25* <sup>27</sup>The boys grew up. Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field. But Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. <sup>28</sup>Now Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his wild game. But Rebekah loved Jacob.

<sup>29</sup>One day Jacob was boiling some stew. Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. <sup>30</sup>Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I beg you, with some of that red stew, because I am famished. Therefore he was called Edom. <sup>31</sup>But Jacob said, First sell me your birthright. <sup>32</sup>Esau said, Look, I am about to die. What profit shall the birthright be to me? <sup>33</sup>Jacob said, Before I give you some stew, first swear to me that you will give me your birthright. So Esau took an oath and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup>Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. After he had eaten and drank, Esau got up and went his way. So Esau despised his birthright. (Gen. 25:27-34)

### **Introduction**

On January 29, 1994, the newspapers carried the report that “Mickey Mantle, whose major league baseball career was noted both for home runs and late nights, had checked into the Betty Ford Center for treatment of alcohol abuse.” At the time, the newspapers listed Mantle’s age as 62. The article went on to state that Mickey had been struggling with “a 43-year battle with alcohol abuse.” Mantle had been abusing his body and mind with alcohol since the age of 19. Stated another way, almost 70% of his life had been sacrificed to the influence of alcohol.

It seems that Mickey never thought he was going to live very long, so he thought little of taking care of his body. The newspapers reported that Mickey is the only male member of his family to live past the age of 41. His father died at the age of 41 from Hodgkin’s Disease. His grandfather died at 40 from the same disease. Mickey was quoted as saying, “If I’d known I was going to live this long, I’d have taken better care of myself.”

When his former teammates heard that Mantle had checked into the alcohol treatment center, one of them remarked, “I hope this helps him. Anything that could help him is good, because we want him around for a long time.”

But it was not to be. A little more than 18 months later, on August 14, 1995, Mickey Mantle was dead. Here was a tremendous talent less than fully utilized, and much more than that, here was a life wasted, because it was undervalued.

What is tragic in the physical realm is all the more tragic in the spiritual realm. In the case of Esau we find a man who undervalued and threw away his spiritual privileges.

The lesson for us to learn is this: we must value our spiritual inheritance, and not be like the profane man who is finally excluded from the kingdom of God. If you do not

want to lose out on the blessing of God, be careful to avoid the marks of the profane man.

## I. Do Not Discount Your Covenantal Privileges

Esau comes in from the fields after a long day of hunting and he is faint (vs. 29,) he is exhausted and famished. When he smells the hearty stew Jacob is cooking, quite naturally he asks for a bowl to satisfy his hunger (vs. 30.)

Jacob sees here the opportunity to secure the precious covenantal birthright for himself, so he offers to give Esau some stew in exchange for the birthright. The “birthright” included the right to become the head of the family, to assume the position formerly occupied by the father; it was traditionally bestowed on the eldest son. In the case of the patriarchs, the birthright would also include the covenant blessings of the LORD, note Abimelech’s words to Isaac in Genesis 26:29, *“You are now the Blessed of Jehovah.”*

Scripture not only records the transaction Esau made with Jacob, it also reveals to us Esau’s thinking: *“Esau said, Look, I am about to die. What profit shall the birthright be to me?”* (vs. 32.) Esau does not consider the birthright to be something for which it is worth dying.

Following the transaction, Esau ate and drank, then got up and went his way (vs.34a.) He had no remorse, no sense of loss, no regard for what he had just given away. Indeed, as Genesis 25:34b states, *“Esau despised his birthright.”* Esau lost, indeed, gave away, the spiritual possession that was his, because he discounted its value. Esau fits the description of the natural man given in Philippians 3:18-19,

*As I have often told you, and even now tell you with tears, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their destiny is perdition, their god is their own appetites, and they glory in their shameful conduct. They set their minds on earthly things.* (Phil. 3:18-19)

This is in striking contrast to that of the spiritual man given in 2 Corinthians 4:18,

*... we do not look [σκοπεω, σκοπος, meaning, to focus on, to pay attention to] at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal.* (2 Cor. 4: 18)

Do not discount your covenantal privileges; on the contrary, heed the exhortations of the Word of God ...

*... continue in the things you have learned and of which you have become assured, because you know from whom you learned them. <sup>15</sup>From the time you were a young child you have known the sacred Scriptures that are able to make you wise concerning salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3:14-15)*

*... we ought to give more earnest attention to the things that were heard, so that we do not drift away from them; <sup>2</sup>for ... <sup>3</sup>how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? (Heb. 2:1-3a)*

*Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which will be richly rewarded. <sup>36</sup>You need to be steadfast, so that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise. (Heb. 10:35-36)*

## **II. Do Not Disrespect the Covenantal Boundaries**

Genesis 26:34-35 records the fact that Esau took two wives, both from among the Canaanites: *“when Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. <sup>35</sup>They were a source of grief to Isaac and to Rebekah.”*

Esau ignores the spiritual boundaries of the covenant—note Genesis 24:3, which records Abraham’s instructions to his servant with regard to the choosing of a wife for Isaac: *“I will make you swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I am living.”* Esau does not even respect the original creation ordinance of God, note Genesis 2:24, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be bound to his **wife** [singular]; and they shall be one flesh.”* It is stated that Esau entered into these marriages when he was 40 years old; i.e., he was old enough to know better, if there had been any spiritual sensitivity in his life.

Genesis 28:6-9 gives an account of a third marriage Esau contracted at a later date:

*Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. <sup>7</sup>Esau observed that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother and went to Paddan-aram. <sup>8</sup>Esau realized that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. <sup>9</sup>So Esau went to Ishmael and married Mahalath who was the sister of Nebaioth and the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son—besides the wives that he had. (Gen. 28:6-9)*

Esau saw that Isaac blessed Jacob, and charged him not to take a wife from among the Canaanites. Esau also saw that his brother Jacob obeyed their father’s command. As Genesis 28: 8 states it, *“Esau realized that the daughters of Canaan*

*did not please his father, Isaac.*" Therefore, Esau went to Ishmael, and took one of Ishmael's daughters as his third wife. Apparently, Esau's motivation was to win his father's approval. But his action shows a total lack of spiritual perception. He does not comprehend that Ishmael is not a part of the covenant community; Ishmael is a natural born son of Abraham, but he does not possess the faith of Abraham, and, therefore, he is not a true "spiritual" son and participant of the covenant. Consequently, his gesture is only superficially religious, because he lacks any true spiritual sensitivity or vitality.

Do not disrespect the covenantal boundaries. The church of God is defined as those who are set apart for God and set apart to be holy like God, such is the dual meaning of the word "sanctify" as it is used in 1 Corinthians 1:2 in the Apostle Paul's definition of the church: *"... the church of God ..., those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints."* Again, we find the same emphasis on holiness unto God and moral separation from the world in Leviticus 20:26, *"you shall be holy for me; for I, Jehovah, am holy. I have separated you from the nations, in order that you should belong to me."* In keeping with this demand for devotion unto the LORD our God, the Apostle Paul exhorts the Corinthian believers in the following terms:

*Come out from among them, and be separate, says the LORD. Do not touch anything that is unclean; and I will receive you. <sup>18</sup>I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty. 7 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1)*

We are warned that the persistent indulgence of sin against the pangs of conscience and a persistent willful transgression of the spiritual boundaries eventually creates a callousness of the soul: *"exhort one another day by day, as long as it is called Today; so that none of you may become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin"* (Heb. 3:13.) Let us pray that the LORD would be gracious to work in us what He describes in Jeremiah 32:40b, *"I will put my fear in their hearts so that they may not depart from me."*

### **III. Do Not Depart from Your Covenantal Roots**

Esau and Jacob are together in the Promised Land at the time of Isaac's death (Gen. 35:29.) Some time afterward, Esau packs up the whole family, departs from the land of Canaan, and resettles in the hill country of Seir (Gen. 36:6-8.) Note that before the final departure recorded in Genesis 36, Esau already had previous connections with the area known as the hill country of Seir. When Jacob returns from Paddan Aram, he sent messengers to Esau in the land of Seir (Gen. 32:3.) Following his reunion with Jacob, Esau returned to Seir, as Genesis 33:16 states, "So that day Esau started on his journey back to Seir."

We are told that, as the time of Isaac's death drew near, *"Jacob came to his father Isaac in Mamre near Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed"* (Gen.35:27.) It may be that he did the same thing, temporarily re-locating in Mamre to be with his father in his final days on earth. Now, after the death of Isaac, Esau makes his full and final departure out of the land of Canaan, he packs up everything and settled in the hill country of Seir.

Apparently, it was only out of a sense of obligation to his father, Isaac, that Esau had any attachment to the Promised Land. Now, when Isaac was removed by death, Esau felt free to make his final departure from the land of Canaan—he had no personal connection to the Promised Land or to the covenant of the LORD.

Do not depart from your covenantal roots. Let us heed the warning issued by the writer to the Hebrews, *"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God"* (Heb. 3:12.)

On the contrary, let us see to it that we are spiritually rooted into Christ, and let us not uproot ourselves out of Christ,

*... now Christ has reconciled you to God by his fleshly body through death, in order to present you holy and without blemish and free from accusation before God the Father; <sup>23</sup>if you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope offered in the gospel that you have heard.* (Col. 1:22-23)

## **Conclusion**

We can look at the example of Mickey Mantle, and say, "What a tragedy! The man ruined his health and threw it away, because he undervalued it."

When all is said and done, will anyone have occasion to look at you and say, "What a tragedy! The man ruined his soul and threw it away, because he undervalued it."

Let us value our spiritual heritage, and not be like the profane man who is finally excluded from the kingdom of God. Let us be careful not to lose out on the kingdom and blessing of God, let us be careful to avoid the marks of the profane man.