

A Mighty Redwood/ Esau – “Who Needs God?”

IGNORING GOD: The SUBTLE DECEPTION

Lesson 6

10/25/15

One might call it “spiritual erosion”, much like a tree planted on a steep slope when winter rains wash away precious soil from around the roots. The result is the same: The tree is now fighting a losing battle for survival, let alone flourishing. What should a believer do to detect early signs of this erosion? How can we detect and fend off the crafty enemy from convincing us that we can get along fine without consulting God?

Principle: *“A devastating and serious sin for believers is the attitude – conscious or unconscious – that God is not really necessary. Even though technically we may say the right ‘spiritual’ things, if we live as though God didn’t even exist we tend to constantly ignore Him, which is a subtle form of self-deception.” - Fran Sciacca*

“The big sin is not idolatry or witchcraft, but those hidden kingdoms of the spirit where Jesus is not Lord.” – Linda Beach

Bible Character: **ESAU**

Also see Lesson 3, *The Silent Killer*

Background: Abraham had two important grandchildren before he died: a set of twin boys. Even though Esau was the eldest, the scripture always mentions Jacob first whenever the two names are mentioned together (see Joshua 24:4, Hebrews 11:20).

Esau made a spontaneous choice one day that stood as a statement of his attitude toward God, surpassing all else that he would do in his life. Esau’s crucial flaw was forgetting about God. The Bible links this one deed with a subtle, insidious attitude that has potential for devastation in the life of any believer. (Fran Sciacca.)

Scripture: Genesis 25:19-34 (NASB, selected verses)

- 21 And Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.
- 22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.
- 23 And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples shall be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and **the older shall serve the younger.**"
- 25 Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.
- 26 And afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.
- 28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.
- 29 And when Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished;
- 30 and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom.
- 31 But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright."
- 32 And Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of **what use then is the birthright to me?**"
- 33 And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.
- 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus **Esau despised his birthright.**

A Bad Trade (vs. 31-33)

Esau was focused on meeting his immediate need without delay or effort. Can you see this flaw in our society today? It is common to want things now and even to be shortsighted in what we’re willing to do or spend to get them. And when the reality of our choices confronts us we like to rationalize our decisions.

Psalms 16:-8-9 gives some advice that would have prevented Esau from his critical error of forgetting about God.

*“I have **set the LORD continually before me**; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely.”*

A Fatal Flaw (v. 34)

See 2 Peter 2:15, "Forsaking the right way..."

Have you ever been tempted to distrust God's promise to provide for you? 2 Peter 1:4 refers to God's "precious and magnificent promises"; do you view them as precious and dependable? Listen to what Hebrews 12:16-17 tells us about Esau:

"16(See to it) that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. 17For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears."

Consider this statement:

"You can't go back and relive a godless chapter of your life to make it godly. God forgives a repentant heart, but doesn't remove the consequences of sin."

► If my heart is not right with God nothing that I say, even with remorse later, will change my relationship with Him or prompt His response to me (or from others). Some verses to consider:

Refer to Psalm 66:18 ("iniquity in my heart"), Job 35:13 ("empty cry"), Prov. 28:13 ("conceals his transgressions"), Lam. 3:8 ("He shuts out my prayer"), Isaiah. 1:15, and Prov. 29:1.

Me, Godless?

The term "godless" means unholy, with no genuine awareness of God. Consider the following passages, completing the phrase, "A godless person is one who...."

Genesis 25:30-34 - "A godless person is one who....*despises God's desire for his life and chooses a selfish, rebellious attitude and actions.*

Isaiah 29:13 - "A godless person is one who.... *acknowledges God verbally in accordance with man-made rules, but whose heart is set against Him ("their hearts are far from me").*

Matthew 23:28 - "A godless person is one who....*puts on a "righteous show" but whose thoughts are against God ("on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.")*

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (esp. verse 5) - "A godless person is one who....*appears godly but is full of wrong attitudes, controlled by Satan and working totally against God.*

For Discussion

What affected area of godless attitude is identified in the following verses, and what is God's desired attitude for that area?

| Manifestation of Godlessness | God's Desired Attitude |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Cor. 6:19-20 | Rom. 12:1 |
| James 3:2, 9 | Psalm 71:8 |
| James 4:13 | Matthew 26:39 |
| 2 Tim. 3:2-5 | Col. 1:9-12 |

Are you in essence ignoring God in an area of your life right now? Take a moment to ask His forgiveness, and commit this area to Him.

Next Time: Conquering Gravity / Resisting Enemy Forces