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12-2-1979

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#### Recommended Citation

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## HOW ESAU SHAMES US TO ACTION

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS  
NUMBER 125  
HEBREWS 12:15-16

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Verse 15 is the last verse in this paragraph addressed to believers. Verses 16 and 17 are addressed to unbelievers and deal with Esau. This is a warning given to believers living in Jerusalem in 67 A.D. From history well documented, we know more about this siege than any other in ancient history. Many of the believers know enough doctrine to get out in time. They knew they couldn't fight against Rome. One million people were bottled up in Jerusalem for nine or ten months in a very intense siege held by three Roman legions. There was civil war and much crime in the city. Some of the reversionistic believers who did not heed the warning that is given here in the book of Hebrews, which warning they had three years prior to the siege, stayed in the city with the unbelievers. They faced death or slavery. One of the most terrible slaughters in all human history took place. History tells us that almost 900,000 were slaughtered. They either starved or were tortured or died fighting on the walls and this was the fifth administration of the discipline which had been outlined concerning the Jews in Leviticus 26.

### Christ Warned Them This Was Coming

First, they were warned by none other than Jesus Christ. Standing on the Mount of Olives, he wept over the city of Jerusalem and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem if you had only known..." But they would not listen even when Jesus told them of what was coming. Now here again we have the warning. But these believers were in reversionism and had allowed a vacuum to be built up in their souls, and minus Bible Doctrine, they had allowed themselves to be persuaded that no destruction was coming.

HEBREWS 12:15 "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;" "Looking diligently" is the present active, participle of episkopeo. It is a strong command when used as a participle and has the force of an imperative. But they had no doctrine and the old sin nature was the dominant force in their lives and they didn't go for doctrine as they are commanded here to do. So we might translate this "See to it!" Next we have a negative purpose clause. We do not have here the usual conjunction hina or the usual verb eimi but the me and tis shows this is a negative purpose clause. So we can translate this, "See to it that there be no one." Next we have the present, active, participle of hustereo and it means to fall below the standard, to fall back from something. So we translate it, "Falling back from the grace of God." We now have a prepositional phrase apo charis. This means deviation from the grace road. (I have designed the grace road for you many times--living grace--saving grace--super grace--dying grace--the golden drawbridge and we salute on one end and embrace on the other end--then surpassing grace for all eternity. Now that is the grace road.) So we are warned here about falling on a detour from the grace road. So this actually says, "Take a personal responsibility for your own soul that nobody falls back from the grace of God."

A Root Of Bitterness

Now we have the negative purpose clause. The word for root is riza and we are told about the root in 1 Cor. 15:36. The seed goes into the ground and dies and the root shoots up and eventually a trunk of a tree is seen. We have here the root of bitterness. This really means the root of sin unconfessed. Once confessed the sin is dead and it should be forgotten. But all too often a mental attitude sin will revive it and here we go over it again and the mental attitude sin we commit becomes greater than the original sin. It is so easy to go back and revive a root of bitterness by a guilt complex and out of this comes chain sinning. You ought to make a decision here and now that you will never be guilty again of chain sinning. A root of bitterness indicates a relapse.

Next we have the present, active, participle of phuo and it means "to sprout" plus the word ano which means "upward."

Keep Pressing On

Let us remember then no person is perfect. We have all failed and will fail many times again. Let us remember that we are still here not because we have not failed, but we are here because of the grace of God. (David was a terrible failure at one period of his life. But he rebounded, got up and moved on and did his greatest work after this sin and failure.) Don't fail to take oversight of your own soul. Next we have the words "trouble you" and this reveals that there is revolution in the soul. You have lost control of your soul. You can easily lose control of your soul through alcohol, or immorality, or drugs. Volition is the real you in your soul and this is the way you are to control your soul. Bitterness indicates a revolt in the soul. Bitterness has entered the mind. And control of the soul is necessary if you are to grow.

Next we have the present, active, subjunctive of enochleo and it means "to cause you trouble." The subjunctive is used to show you that this is potential, this is possible. This is a very strong warning.

A Second Warning

This second warning starts out with the words "and thereby". We have kai plus the prepositional phrase dia houtos and we will translate this "and through this." This means others around you are hurt. When you are hurt, others are hurt too. Now we have the words hoi polloi and it means "the many" and it refers to all those around us. Next we have the words "be defiled" from the aorist, passive, subjunctive of miaino. (This is a figure of the garbage being dumped off the balcony on you as you walk below in the street.) This is a perfect word for the defilement of the soul. The passive voice means that you receive this miaino. The subjunctive means that this is possible in your own soul.

Corrected Translation Of This Verse

"See to it (a strong reminder to your own soul) that no one falls back from the grace of God. That not one root of bitterness sprouting upward causes trouble (relapse into reverisonism) and through this relapse many be contaminated."

Now in the next verses we will have a new subject, and these verses will deal with a famous unbeliever. This is the case history of Esau.

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

We now have a third negative purpose clause. And we have the words me tis. "That there be no fornicator." The word "fornicator" is from  pornos. This is referring to sexual immorality. But with Esau here it is not necessarily referring to physical fornication. And whether Esau was guilty of physical fornication we are not told in the Scripture. But this is referring to spiritual fornication. Since in the first paragraph of chapter thirteen we will have this subject of fornication, it is a good time to stop and summarize the doctrine of fornication.

### THE DOCTRINE OF FORNICATION

1. DEFINITION  
It refers in most cases to sexual activity outside of marriage. Spiritual fornication refers to reversionism. Sex is designed to be an expression of love between right man and right woman. It is an expression of the soul. It is given us from God. Adultery may be classified as fornication. The terms mean the same. Fornication is the seduction of one of the opposite sex. In contrast to this, abnormal fornication is called incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, molestation of children, indecent exposure, and rape.
2. THE PROHIBITION OF FORNICATION. (Exodus 20:14)  
This is a part of the Ten Commandments. Also given in Deut. 5:18 and in 1 Cor. 6:18. This is a sin against one's own body. (Col. 3:5) Spiritual fornication is mentioned here under the term "idolatry." (1 Thess. 4:3) Mental adultery is forbidden in Matthew 5:27-28. Incest is forbidden in 1 Cor. 5:1-7. Also in Leviticus 18:6-17, 20:14; Deut. 27:20; Romans 1:26. Lesbianism is prohibited by God. A recent survey in a certain city showed that 80 of the prostitutes were lesbians. Also bestiality is forbidden. (Lev. 18:23, Lev. 20:15)
3. PHALLIC REVERSIONISM HAS A GREAT INFLUENCE ON THE SOUL.  
Proverbs 6:32 says, "He that makes her corrupts his own soul." Ephesians 4:18-19 refers to the blackout of the soul.
4. FORNICATION IS LINKED WITH A FRANTIC SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS.  
(Ephesians 5:3)
5. THERE IS A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE IN FORNICATION.  
(1 Cor. 6:13-18) Sex is normal in its place. We are admonished to flee fornication.
6. ADULTERY IS A BONA FIDE REASON FOR DIVORCE.  
(Matthew 5:32 and 19:9) Divorce in the Bible means the right to remarry. Adultery or desertion gives one the right to remarry.
7. ADULTERY OR FORNICATION OFTEN USED IN THE BIBLE IS A SPIRITUAL SENSE. It is used that way here in this passage in Hebrews. (Jeremiah 3:8-10, Ezekiel 16:23-43, Revelation 17:1-5)
8. THE SANCTIFICATION OF LOVE BETWEEN RIGHT MAN AND RIGHT WOMAN IS MARRIAGE. (1 Thess. 4:3-4, Hebrews 13:4)

9. THE GLORY OF LOVE BETWEEN RIGHT MAN AND RIGHT WOMAN IS DESCRIBED IN A SPIRITUAL ANALOGY. (1 Cor. 11:7)
10. BIBLICAL APPLICATION OF LOVE TO THE SINGLE PERSON.
  - a. Right man and right woman were designed by God in eternity past. Therefore, there exists for you somewhere in the world your opposite number by divine design. There is only one of you.
  - b. There is an exception to this. Celibacy or supreme sacrifice. (1 Cor. 9:5, Jeremiah 16:2) A normal person refraining from sex for spiritual reasons (like Lottie Moon).
  - c. Every believer under grace will eventually meet his right partner. To take in doctrine is the way to prepare for marriage.
  - d. There is one person for you. Have a motto, "No other person but the right one will do." It is not a case of a cheap substitute but the case of no substitute.
  - e. Fornication or adultery is is accepting a cheap substitute in order to gratify an emotional or biological urge.
  - f. An antidote for fornication is spiritual growth, the intake of doctrine.
  - g. Waiting for the right one insures happiness in sex.

#### Look At Esau

Esau was an unbeliever and he is being used here as an example for us. He is called here a reversionist. This is spiritual fornication and reversionism. He is referred to as a fornicator and a profane person. We begin with the disjunctive particle and it shows the other side of Esau. The word for profane is bebelos and it means "unhallowed," in the sense of being outside of the plan of God. Next we have hos Esau. No one can be closer to being a Jew than Esau was. And this message was to Jews living in Jerusalem in 67 A.D. Abraham was originally a Gentile, but he became a Jew in a new land with God's identification mark cut on his body. Abraham became a Jew officially at the age of 99 and he had two wives. Sarah was his first wife, and then Keturah, and by her, he had five children and all of them are founders of Arab tribes. This is a Semitic line but not a Jewish line. Abraham had one son who was a Jew and his name was Isaac. The Jewish line goes down through him. Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was not a believer but Jacob was a believer. These were twins, just as close together as boys could be, but one a Jew and the other a Gentile. Every true Jew knew this history and he knew this was as close as you could get to being a Jew and not be one. The reason Jacob is a Jew and Esau is not is that one believed in Christ and one did not. This is the basic difference. Regeneration was the distinguishing mark between the true Jew and the one who was not. When they were born, they were different, one was red and had hairs on him and the other was fair and no hairs on him. When the Bible says, "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated," the Jew understood what it meant. Jesus Christ was called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Every Jew understood his heritage. Esau is a beautiful illustration of the unbelieving type reversionist.

#### THE FIRST USE OF THIS TERM

The first use we have of the term of loving Jacob and hating Esau is in Malachi 1:2-3. This is always referred to when a grace appeal is made. This is a great prophecy as to how the Edomite would be destroyed. This verse three ends with the words "His heritage is left for the jackals of the desert."

Now this is an anthropopathism of how God loved one twin and hated the other. God has perfect character and this anthropopathism is giving to God a characteristic which he really does not have. But it is given so we can understand in human terms what is really going on here. Human terms here are hatred and love. But they are used of God to show that God did not approve of Esau but he did approve of Jacob. Both Esau and Jacob were cheaters and scoundrels but Jacob became a believer and Esau did not. Jacob was born again and Esau was not, so these twins will be separated for all eternity. So, if you wanted to shock the Jew, all you had to do was to compare them to Esau. This would always insult a true Jew.

THE SECOND USE OF THE TERM IS ROMANS 9:6-13.

This is the second reference to Esau as being hated by God. Hatred here is used as the divine attitude toward the unbeliever and love is used as God's attitude toward someone who responds to the grace of God. Romans 9:6 says, "But such is not the case. The word of God always stays on course. For they are not all Israel who are descendants from Israel." This is the point he is making. All Hebrews are not true Jews. From Abraham came both Isaac and Ishmael, but Isaac is in and Ishmael is out. The line of the Jew was founded on regeneration. Romans 9:7 says, "Neither are they all children because they are descendants of Abraham. But through Isaac your seed will be called." Romans 9:8 says, "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are imputed as seed."

Romans 9:9 says, "For this is the doctrine of the promise (Now we have a quote from Genesis 18:10) at this time I will come and Sarah will have a son."

Romans 9:10 says, "And not only this, but there was also Rebecca when she had conceived twins by one man our ancestor Isaac (This is an appeal to the Jews to accept Christ on the basis of their true heritage)."

Romans 9:11 says, "For though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything bad or good, in order that God's promise according to election by grace might stand, not because of works, but because of him who does the electing."

Romans 9:12 says, "It was said of her, the older will serve the younger, just as it stands written Jacob I have loved but Esau have I hated."

Therefore, just as in Malachi so we have the same in Romans, the emphasis is on regeneration. All Jews, if they measure up to God's standard for them, will believe in Jesus Christ. (The writer of Hebrews evidently was a Jew and he had a great education in classical greek.)

Let us get a summary why we have this expression "As Esau."

1. Millions of years ago in the doctrine of divine decrees the plan of God was formulated on the basis of man's volitional function in time. Man's volitional function was known to God in eternity past. He knew every decision every member of the human race would ever make. He knew the direction that every free will would ever take. Every decision was anticipated as a part of his omniscience.
2. It is God's sovereign will and purpose to save all mankind. When Christ died on the cross he died for all men of the human race. That is why we have the word "whosoever." This means unlimited atonement.

3. However, mankind is free to reject Christ as Saviour and often does, such as Esau.
4. God knew millions of years ago the attitude every person would have toward Christ when the gospel would be presented to him. He knew the attitude of Jacob and of Esau. He knew that Jacob would believe in Christ and that Esau would not. So while the twins were still in the womb before they were people, God said, "Esau have I hated but Jacob have I loved." In other words, before they had done anything, an anthropathism anticipated the way each one would go in regard to the gospel. This does not mean that God violated the volition of either. He did not.
5. Therefore, this anthropathism is used, hatred to describe Esau's rejection of Jesus Christ as Saviour.
6. God loved Esau in the sense that Jesus Christ died for him, but he hated him in the sense that he did not go positive and believe in Christ.
7. Therefore, the twins of Rebecca were divided in time as well as in eternity.
8. They were born twins but one was a Jew and the other a Gentile. One was saved and the other was unsaved. One came under the covenant of Israel and the other came under the covenant of the lake of fire.

So far in this verse we have, "That there be no fornicator or unhallowed type such as Esau." This is not an attempt to teach everything about Esau, just enough to try to shock those Jews in Jerusalem in 67 A.D. to turn and believe before it was too late.

Next in the verse we have the relative pronoun hos referring to Esau. Then we have anti brosis and it means "for one meal" or "Who in exchange for one act of eating one meal." He came in hungry from hunting and smelled the beans cooking. They are described as lentils. He was so hungry he was willing to sell his birthright for "one act of eating." (Genesis 25:27-34 tells the story.)

A literal translation of this passage says this--

Verse 27 "When the boys grew up Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the fields, but Jacob was a complete man, dwelling in tents." (One liked to roam and hunt, but Jacob was self-sustaining.)

Verse 28 "Now Isaac loved Esau, because his game was in his mouth but Rebecca loved Jacob."

Verse 29 "But when Jacob cooked a stew, Esau came in from the field and was very hungry."

Verse 30 "Therefore, Esau said to Jacob, let me have a taste of that red stuff cooking there for I am hungry. Consequently his name became Edom or Red."

Verse 31 "But Jacob said no. But first, sell me thy birthright. (Possibly that stew had some chunks of lamb in it.)

Verse 32 "Esau said, behold I am about to die. What good is the birthright to me?"

Verse 33 "And Jacob replied, today make me a solemn promise, and he made the promise and sold his birthright to Jacob."

Verse 34 "Then Jacob gave Esau bread (Jacob could bake bread) and lentil stew and he ate and drank and he rose up and departed. Consequently from that time on, Esau despised his birthright."

The word for sold is the aorist, middle, indicative of apodidomi and it means "to barter, to give away." The word "birthright" is from prototokakie from prototokos and it means "the right of inheritance." It means all the family estate, the priesthood, everything. The younger son would receive nothing but a good pep talk to go out and do the best you can. In that day, birthright meant everything. This constantive aorist gathers up all that happened in those verses we have just studied. The middle voice is an indirect middle, emphasizing Esau as the agent who was wholly responsible for this act. This middle voice really condemns Esau. It means "Esau, himself, and only Esau, did this."

So this says, "That there be no fornicator or unwholly type like Esau, who, he, himself, sold his birthright for one meal."

### Summary

1. From the reversionism of the unbelievers in Jerusalem in A.D. 67, this passage moves to the unbelieving Jew named Esau.
2. These Jews of 67 A.D. are compared to Esau, which is the greatest insult any Jew could receive. This is maximum embarrassment.
3. For these unbelieving Jews to be called fornicators is to imply that what they believed was false. They had deserted their spiritual heritage.
4. Esau sold the rights of the firstborn for one meal. Just for the pleasure of satisfying his taste buds.
5. Esau's hunger is like a reaction to the gospel. Selling his birthright for a meal is like the frantic search for happiness.
6. It is the dog returning to his vomit and the pig wallowing in the mud of 2 Peter 2:22. Esau returned to the vomit of religious apostasy.
7. The analogy is quite obvious to the Jew. Three years from the moment this was uttered, the Jews would go down in the 5th cycle of discipline.
8. Negative volition toward doctrine produced a vacuum in the soul and allowed Satanic viewpoint to enter in. This was the last trumpet blast for these people.
9. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all born again believers. The true heritage of Israel is a true spiritual heritage. This is brought out in the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants to Israel. Regeneration is their road to glory and the writer of Hebrews is greatly disturbed because they are neglecting this road.