

An Inheritance of a Different Kind: Conflict

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Preacher: Andy Pynch

[0:00] This morning we're going to continue our series in Genesis. It's the last chapter that we'll hear before we go back to Romans.

! And the reason we're doing that is to look at the life of Jacob because Paul in Romans uses Jacob as an illustration, as an example to us. So today we don't have a story about Jacob, but we have a story about Esau.

And if you've been following along with us, you'll know that Jacob and Esau are brothers and their lives are intertwined. So this morning we have a story about Esau, or as we'll see, a story about Esau's family.

This is Genesis 36. It's pretty lengthy and there's some names in here that are strange. So you're not alone in seeing the strangeness.

Okay? This is God's word. These are the generations of Esau. That is Edom. Esau took his wives from the Canaanites. Adah, the daughter of Elon, the Hittite.

[1:09] Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibion, the Hivite. Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. Adah bore to Esau Eliphaz.

Basemath bore Ruel. Aholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan.

He went away into a land from his brother, Jacob, for their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock.

So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. Esau is Edom. These are the generations of Esau, the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.

[2:09] These are the names of Esau's sons. Eliphaz, the son of Adah, the wife of Esau. Ruel, the son of Basemath, the wife of Esau.

The sons of Eliphaz were Taman, Omar, Zepho, Gatham, Kenaz. Timnah was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son.

She bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Ruel, Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizah.

These are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibion, Esau's wife.

She bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, Korah. These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau, the sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn of Esau. The sons of Taman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatham, and Amalek.

[3:16] These are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom. These are the sons of Adah. These are the sons of Ruel, Esau's son, the chiefs of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizah.

These are the chiefs of Ruel in the land of Edom. These are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife.

The chiefs, Jeush, Jalam, Korah. These are the chiefs born of Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Esau, that is Edom.

These are the chiefs. These are the sons of Seir, the Horite, the inhabitants of the land. Lotan, Shobal, Zibion, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, Dishan.

These are the chiefs of the Horites, the son of Seir in the land of Edom. The sons of Lotan were Hori and Haman. Lotan's sister was Timnah. These are the sons of Shobal, Alvin, Manahath, Ebal, Shepo, Onam.

[4:21] These are the sons of Zibion, Ahiah, Anah. He is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness as he pastured the donkeys of Zibion, his father. These are the children of Anah, Dishon, Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

These are the sons of Dishon, Hebdon, Eshbon, Ethron, and Caron. These are the sons of Ezer, Bilhan, Zavan, Akan.

These are the sons of Dishan, Uz, and Aran. These are the chiefs of the Horites, the chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibion, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

These are the chiefs of the Horites, chief by chief in the land of Seir. These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom. Before any king reigned over the Israelites, Bela, the son of Baor, reigned in Edom, the name of this city, of his city, excuse me, being Dinhaba Abah.

And Bela died, and Jobab, the son of Zerah, of Bozer, reigned in his place. Joheb died, and Husham, of the land of the Temanites, reigned in his place.

[5:29] Husham died, and Hadad, the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian and the country of Moab, reigned in his place. The name of his city, being Evta. Hadad died, and Semla, of Masarakah, reigned in his place.

Semla died, and Shal, of Rehoboth, on the Euphrates, reigned in his place. Shal died, and Balhanan, the son of Achbor, reigned in his place. Balhanan, the son of Achbor, died, and Hadar reigned in his place.

The name of his city, being Pal. His wife's name was Mehel Tebel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezhabab. These are the names of the chief of Esau, according to their clans and their dwelling places, by the names of the chiefs.

Timnah, Alva, Jeheth, Aholibama, Elah, Pinion, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Eram.

These are the chiefs of Edom, that is Esau, the father of Edom, according to the dwelling places in the land of their possession. Let's pray. Lord, you give us scripture for our benefit.

[6:41] You speak to us through it, even when there are weird names, even when there are a lot of names. Father, we ask that you might use it. Show us how it all points to you, and we need your help in this.

We ask in Christ's name, amen. Have you ever been caught not paying attention? Not as I was reading those words, but maybe in something a little more important.

Maybe you've been talking to a friend, or you've been in conversation, and you realize that friend has asked you a question, and you're staring at them because your mind is someplace else. Or maybe, instead of daydreaming, you missed a detail on your schedule.

Or if you're a kid, or really if you're a parent, you've done this, you know your kid's not paying attention, and you ask them a question completely unrelated, and they just stare at you with this blank look.

We all miss important details. But when I was in high school, I had a sneaking suspicion that my teacher didn't actually read my papers.

[7:44] So I did what any high school student does. Instead of writing about Julius Caesar, which I did for two or three pages, I thought Julius Caesar, of course, loved Little Caesars.

And you know who loves Little Caesars pizza? The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. And then I continued with Julius Caesar. Now, I'm not saying if you're a student here in homeschool, middle school, grad school, I'm not saying do that.

But that trend for me continued all the way through my academic career. Except I got a little bit better at it. I would put things, little nuggets, if you will, in footnotes, quotes of movies, quotes of songs.

And teachers sometimes would circle them in red, but most often they would miss it. So like any great artist, they paint themselves or leave little trails of information throughout their paintings or writings.

And I, being a great artist, am no different. Now, kids, I'm not encouraging you to do that, but it illustrates the fact that we often skip over things that are really important.

[8:47] Or that we think are really unimportant. Like lists of names, places, dates. We're masters of efficiency. Let's get straight to the point.

I don't have time to read over this. I want to skip it over because I want to get to the real meat of that. Now, I'm not saying Genesis 36 is something that you're going to print out and put on your refrigerator.

I'm not saying it's probably something that's going to commit, you're going to commit it to memory and recall it in times of trial. But if we skip over this, we're going to miss what God has for us. And you might be thinking, what in the world could God have for us in this? I know the forest, and this is clearly a tree, and I'm looking at the forest, and I'm not focusing on that one tree. But this morning, if we brush past this less important part that we think, or less interesting part, or if we're really, really honest, we could say, I could really do without that part of Scripture this morning. [9:48] We're going to miss the sense in which God has spoken to us and told us about what happens to Esau. Yes, even what God has promised to Esau.

Esau, you say? I know about Jacob. I know about the promise to make him great that he inherits from all his forefathers. I know about this promise that he's going to get the birthright, and he's going to rule over, the younger's going to rule over the older.

But what about this promise to Esau? I thought he's a bad guy. Well, God promises things to Esau. And if we think of Esau, kind of like our appendix, right?

God's given it to us, but I really know that I can live without it, so I'm not going to pay it any attention. In fact, hey, doctor, you could even cut that thing out, and I'll be okay. You might not be completely wrong about Esau, but if we miss, if we skip over the life of Esau and what comes after Esau, then we miss how God keeps his promise to even to people that we might see as wicked, evil.

They don't do the right thing. So God keeps his promise even to Esau, and we're going to see that in two things. We're going to see that in how he keeps his promise to him in terms of building a family, building a nation, and this great inheritance that is very different than Jacob's, but it looks a little bit similar.

[11:17] So first, let's look at his family, the promise to grow him. Now, from the outset of this chapter, the focus is not on Esau at all.

We know it's about his family, and even though the Moses, the Moses that leads God's people that writes this book has spent all this time on Jacob, we get this little blip about Esau before we go into Jacob's family, and you say Jacob's family.

Well, Joseph is an inheritor in Jacob's line, but this is focusing on Esau with this reference to something that we'll know as a Bible reader is very familiar to us, Edom.

Where does that come from? Well, it comes from Esau. Now, Esau continues in the family tradition of Jacob and Esau by doing knuckleheaded things. His own disobedience, his own personal disobedience, is the catalyst, the means by which God comes and brings all this into fruition.

But Esau continues the tradition of having really, really bad marriage choices. Now, unlike Jacob, who gets tricked by his father-in-law, Jacob is tricky himself, and then gets tricked by his future father-in-law, and then father-in-law again and again, Esau commits kind of a sin of a different color.

[12:36] Not that Jacob was sinning, but the marital woes continue in this family. And where do they start? Jacob chose wives that were very different than Esau.

Who does Esau choose for a wife? He chooses a Canaanite. Now, yes, the prohibition or the outlawing of choosing a wife from the land of Canaan is not yet set in stone in Scripture.

That'll come later in Deuteronomy. But the principle is still the same. He's chosen a wife from a foreign land. And what happens when you choose a wife? She influences you, often for good, in this case, for evil.

Because this wife from a strange land has drawn Esau's heart away. It's drawn it away from the God who promised all these blessings, the God who preserved them.

It's drawn them away to strange gods. And Esau chooses a wife who does just that. But not just one, but more than one.

[13:39] Look with me at verse 2. Esau took his wives from the Canaanites. It's almost like a mic drop on that sentence. Esau has done wickedness.

Now, what follows in the successive verses is really complex. There's a whole list of names. And you think, yes, Esau does what kind of God's people have been doing in rebellion up to this point. They've chosen more than one wife. But that's not the difficult part about this text. The difficult part about this text is the simple fact that Esau's wives have appeared before in previous chapters, in chapter 26 and following.

But the list in those chapters is different than this list. So what are we going to do? You have choices. People will come to this and say, surely God's word's not true because the list in 26 and

other chapters before doesn't match this list.

Well, we have to make a decision. We're going to trust God's word or are we going to think we're smarter than God's word? Because there are more reasonable options.

[14 : 50] Jacob is also known as what? Not just Jacob, but he's got another name, Israel. That could be what's going on here. In fact, if you look at these lists and some of the parents of these wives, they have the same dad in other lists.

Or it could be an incomplete list. Think about this. Some of the lists of the disciples, they don't all match up and look the same. It's because they're known by different names, just like Jacob and Israel.

Or it's an incomplete list. Because Jacob, excuse me, Esau, had a bunch of wives and he did not choose wisely. I think it's much more likely that the list is incomplete or some combination of having names that are different.

You know, basemath is actually a word that means perfume. So it could be like sweetie or honey. And it's applied to one of these wives. But it ends with this statement.

The list of his wives ends like this. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. The trajectory is looking at Esau's family and how God has increased his number and blessed him in some sense.

[16 : 02] Blessed him with more wives and sons. And we see that continuing. He gets richer and richer and richer. Look at verses 6 and 7. Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all the members of his household and his livestock, all of his beasts, all of his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan.

And what does he do? He went away from his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock.

So what does Esau do? Verse 8 tells us. So he goes to another land, to the hill country of Seir. And then Esau is Edom. Remember that. We'll come back to that.

So he has grown and been blessed by God in this temporal sense. He's gotten rich. He's got a lot of kids. He's got a lot of wives. It's so great that he does the only responsible thing that a business owner should do, right?

Increases market share. He goes to a new land, a new territory so that he can be responsible. But he leaves the land of promise.

[17 : 09] He leaves the land that is blessed. If you take a minute to think about the generations that have come before in Genesis, there's another guy who does the same thing.

Who acts really reasonably and moves so he can grow his business. So he can have more space, more elbow room. And that man is Ishmael. Now, Esau and Ishmael move to a different land, away from the land of promise, so that they can become more wealthy.

And what does he do as he sets out to Seir? He goes to that same land that Jacob had left in a hurry because Jacob's sons had done something really wicked because of their sister.

It was a land in which they slaughtered all the men and they left so they wouldn't be killed. But remember, this is a fulfillment of a promise. A promise made to Esau's mother, Jacob's mom as well.

What is that promise though? We know that it's the younger will serve the older, but it's also this promise. Two nations are in your womb.

[18 : 16] Two peoples from within you shall be divided. One shall be the stronger than the other. The older shall serve the younger. And here we have the birth of two nations.

Not just a family. Not just Esau and a couple of his wives and a couple of his kids. But as we see as this chapter goes on, it's a multiplication. It's a raising up of two different nations.

And it ends with this phrase, or really a statement. Esau is Edom. It's looking forward and saying, Edomites, the land of Edom is coming from Esau.

And it all goes back to the fulfillment of that promise made to Rebekah that two nations would rise from within her. Now, if you know anything about the history of Israel, that should be worrying to you.

It's no longer just Esau and his kids and his wives. It's not just them moving to Seir, but Edom is here. And Edom, anytime we hear that, we should kind of hiss and stomp our feet.

[19:17] Because they're the bad guys. And if you know about Israel's history, you know God's people, that they're worried about Edom all the time. They're evil.

And what the author is doing is foreshadowing what's to come throughout the rest of history. That Edom and Israel are going to continue on these two parallel paths. And they're going to fight. It's like when you watch a movie, right? You have this set of characters and you're invested into this storyline. And then all of a sudden it cuts to a new set of characters you've never been introduced to before.

And you think about, how are these two going to meet? Or a play, when you see one scene and there's development in this scene and then another scene, has nothing to do with what you've seen before.

Or you read a book and it flips chapter by chapter. And you're just thinking, am I reading two different books? Well, kind of. But eventually they meet. Israel is doing one thing.

[20:13] Edom is doing another. But we know, we know from the rest of scripture that they're going to meet eventually. And it's not going to be good. Jacob is the family of promise.

And Esau is the family or the nation of conflict. Of disobedience. Outside of God's love.

The nation of Israel is blessed. Not because they do everything right. Not because Jacob does everything right. We've seen that. But Edom is not the one with promise. It's Jacob's family.

They're on a collision course for conflict. But the blessing that Edom gets, that Esau gets, to make himself a nation, is still a fulfillment of God's promise.

It's not the ultimate blessing that Jacob has. But God still fulfills his promise. Why does this matter? Really. Why does this matter for me as I go to work on Monday?

[21:13] Why does this matter as I sit in the carpool line? Why does it matter when I'm trying to teach my kids around the kitchen table? Why does it matter for you? Remember this. God keeps his promise to Esau.

God keeps his promise to Esau. So think about the last time that you walked through a hard time. We question God's goodness. We question and think, is God going to do what he said he's going to do?

Am I going to have enough money at the end of the month? God, you said you're going to take care of me. God, you said it wasn't good for me to be alone. But where's my husband? Where's my wife? God, you said that marriage was for my good. But it seems so hard. It seems so hard raising children. You've told me that you're going to bless me through them.

And they don't even love the things that I love. Not hobbies and interests. But they don't love you. God has kept his promise to Esau.

[22:18] God will keep his promise to you. Think about this. Jesus makes the same argument. If Esau is kind of a son of disobedience, how much more will God keep his promise to those whom he loves?

Jesus makes this argument all the time in the Gospels. He says this. Hey, listen. If I take care of the birds and the flowers, how much more am I going to take care of you?

He says this time and time again. If you have a human father who cares for you, how much more will a heavenly father love you and care for you? When we walk through trials, we simply dump that out of our minds.

Because we don't really rest and receive that and rest upon it. We don't draw strength from that. We kind of hedge our bets and think, man, is that really true? But if God keeps his promise to Esau to grow him to be a great nation, not loved, but to bless him with numbers and wealth and make him into a nation, man, how much more is God going to keep his promise to those whom he loves, to you, to those who have put their faith in Jesus?

Think about that the next time we're walking through difficulty. Because it's not a matter of if. It's just when. And it might be right now. God keeps his promises even to those, especially to those whom he loves.

[23:53] Now let's turn our attention to the second part of chapter 36. And don't worry, I'm not going to go line by line with every name. Okay? Because there are a lot of them in there and they're really hard to say.

If we're honest though, this promise of inheritance is a difference of distinction. Not really a difference at all though.

Because the family, the promise of inheritance, is this family that grows into a nation. And if we look at a quick survey of all these names of descendants, there'll be some in there that we recognize. Look with me at verse nine. It starts out like this. These are the generations of Esau, the father of the Edomites and the hill country of Seir.

And then it goes into all these names. And all these names, some of them, again, might be familiar to us. Some of them we recognize. We recognize the Edomites. Edomites.

[24:50] We know Edom because that's Esau. What about Amalek? What about the Amalekites? They're almost like the poor cousins. One commentator calls them the poor cousins of the Edomites.

They're still Israel's enemies. They still do things that are wicked. And in doing so, they challenge God's people.

They're born through illegitimate means. Now these names, some of them will come to prominence later in history. And as they do so, they're always warring against Israel.

They're always challenging them. They're always enemies. They're always challenging God's people. And we see that throughout Scripture.

There's some that are unfamiliar to us. What about Teman or Kenaz? They show back up in Scripture, but they don't figure prominently. But Edom does. Remember, Edom is the mortal enemy of Israel.

[25:54] Edom is so wicked because they're continuing in this disobedience. And as they do so, the rest of Scripture kind of testifies to this. Remember, the Edomites are the people that don't let Moses and Israel through their land to go back into the promised land from Egypt.

But it doesn't stop in Genesis. It continues with Saul. It continues with David. It continues in the Psalms, where the psalmist prays against the Edomites. Israel and Edom are two nations going in different directions that come from two brothers.

But Edom isn't the only nation that appears here. Look at verse 20. You kind of have this little nugget in here about the other people that live in the land of Seir that Edom, Esau, expels.

The sons of Seir appear with Esau's family. They're pushed aside, though, as Esau grows in power and takes the land.

And think about that. Edom gets land. But that's not the only thing that they get. They also get a king. Look at verse 31. There are kings there. There are kings before Israel.

[27:06] So imagine if you're Joe Israelite and you're living knowing that you have these promises and you're looking out at this nation of disobedience and you recognize they have a land.

Where's my land? God, are you going to care for me? Where's my king? They have a king. God, have you forgotten me? It seems like it's all going to go well, though, for Edom.

Right? But we know from the rest of Genesis and the rest of the kings it doesn't. Remember, this friction between Israel and Edom is all over the Old Testament. Amos 1 says this.

It records how much they're wicked. It says God promises vengeance on them for how they fought against Israel because Edom pursued his brother. And was he nice?

No. He gets pursued. He pursues his brother with a sword and casts off all pity and anger went through him all the time. And he kept his wrath forever.

[28:07] And for that, God promises fire. There's those bitter prayers of the psalmist against Edom for destruction. We know that Babylon is bad and Edom is worse because on some level they should have known better.

But how do we know that this is not just a disagreement between brothers that keeps growing into this foreign policy battle? How do we know that?

Has Edom actually done anything wrong? How do we know Edom is evil? Well, it's this in Malachi 1. Jacob I have loved and Esau I have hated.

Romans repeats this idea. And it figures prominently the difference between the two is not that Jacob does everything right. But God loves Jacob.

God loves. That's the difference in all of this. Esau's promises were kept by God. The promise to make him a nation. But God loves Jacob.

[29:10] Promises are kept to both. And Esau is different because Jacob is loved by God. That's the same idea that I've been exploring with a bunch of soldiers at lunchtime on Wednesday.

But not in Genesis. In Ephesians. Paul talks about this very fact that God's love is the thing that causes us to become Christians. It's this thing that causes us to go from death to life.

It's this thing that causes Jacob to receive the promise, the blessings, and Esau to be hated. It's this. Paul reminds us of this.

That God, being rich in mercy because of the great love which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and raised up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So that in the coming ages he might show to us the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

[30 : 19] Jacob was blessed not because Jacob did the right thing. Jacob was blessed not because he kept God's law. Jacob was blessed not because he was better than Esau, but because of God's love to him.

Esau receives the fulfillment of these promises, but Jacob is loved. Esau inherits conflict and will continue in that.

Jacob receives eternal life. The good news is, if you're here today, so can you, because of the love that's been shown to us in Christ Jesus. Jacob is loved by God and receives eternal life.

We can too, through Christ Jesus. Now, if you're a Christian here this morning, think about how much more God cares for you than Esau.

Will he keep his promises? Yes, he will, because he's kept them even to Esau. If you're trusting in Christ this morning, think about you're in that state because he loves you, not because of what you've done.

[31 : 31] And our inheritance is not conflict, not enmity with God, but eternal life forevermore. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the reminder this morning of your promise, keeping even to sons of disobedience, people like Esau.

Father, you've given us portions of scripture to remind us of how you work, how you preserve a nation, but most of all, how you love us. And we ask that you might do so this morning.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Please stand and sing with us.