

## TEARS

**“Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.” (Heb 12:17)**

Biologically speaking, there are three kinds of tears. First, the “basal tears” that are continuous and lubricate the eyes. Second, the “reflex tears” that occur when we chop onions or get smoke in our eyes. Third, the “emotional tears” that are triggered by something going on in our heart. All three kinds, of course, were given to us by God for a purpose. When there are no tears something is wrong. Medically speaking this abnormality is called “dry eye syndrome” or “keratitis sicca”. Spiritually speaking the lack of tears might well be indicative of a hardened heart. In both instances, however, something is wrong. Jesus left us an example that we should follow in His steps. If Jesus wept, maybe we should too. Crying can actually produce something therapeutic and cleansing in those who want to be like Jesus.

Our text is about Esau. Two things about him are mentioned, # 1 the birthright, and # 2 the blessing. It is significant to note that he despised his birthright but sought the blessing with tears. Esau was indifferent to the birthright, but passionate about the blessing. God had a problem with this. In fact, the Bible says that Esau was “sexually immoral” and “godless” (Heb. 12:16). Further, God does not want any of us to be like Esau. That’s why we need to examine our own heart and see what makes us cry.

First, let us consider the “birthright”. In the Age of the Patriarchs the oldest male member of the family served as priest. Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices (Gen. 8:20). Job built an altar and made sacrifices (Job 1:5). Abraham built altars every place he moved and called upon the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:4; 13:18; 22:9; etc.) When the Patriarch died the privilege of being priest was passed on to his firstborn son. When Esau despised his birthright it demonstrated that he had no interest in spiritual things. That’s why the Bible calls him “godless” (Heb. 12:16). The focus of the birthright was on seeking a right relationship with God and Esau didn’t seem to be interested in that at all.

The “blessing” Esau sought, however, had nothing to do with religion. The blessing involved earthly benefits like the dew of heaven and riches of the earth. The blessing involved an abundance of grain and new wine. The blessing would cause nations to bow down to Esau and empower him to be lord over his brothers (see Gen. 27:27 - 29). When Jacob got Esau’s birthright it really didn’t matter, but when he got his blessing it brought bitter tears. Something significant was wrong. Esau was a “skillful hunter and man of the field” (Gen. 25:27). His body was covered with hair and his hands and feet, no doubt, were calloused from many years in the wilderness. Esau was tough. He could endure inclement weather and remain dry eyed at the sight of his own blood. The thought of not being rich, however, was more than he could bear. It touched a tender place in his heart and triggered shameless tears. He asked his blind father again and again to reverse the decision and pronounce the blessing upon him. Esau could not, however, inherit the blessing even though he sought it diligently with tears.

Tears can be an eloquent means of communication. Little babies shed tears when they have no other way of sharing their emotions. Victims of traumatic brain injury who cannot speak can share their pain by shedding a tear. Illiterate natives, and strangers who cannot speak our language, can build a bridge of communication to us with tears. Amy Lambert composed the song: “Tears are a language that God understands”. This is, however, a two edged sword. God is not always happy at the things that make us cry. He is a Jealous God, that’s why He was so disgusted with Esau. God understood Esau’s tears. He knew that Esau really didn’t care about Him. He knew that Esau loved the things of earth more than he loved Him. Since there are so many people in the world like Esau, it is no wonder that Jesus is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Even God does not like to be despised and rejected! Let us live in such a way that our radiant love for God will dry the tears of Jesus.