

Audio Transcript of Sermon  
February 24, 2024  
The Firstborn

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. If you haven't seen anything good on television lately, have you thought of reading from the Old Testament? The accounts of people from the Bible read like salacious novels and would make an interesting television miniseries or telenovela. When we think of people from the Bible it is easy to think of them as completely righteous and beyond reproach even though what is written in the Bible indicates something totally different. We think of Abraham as the father of the faithful and patriarch of the nation of Israel, and even his household had its problems. Not only was Abraham married to Sarah, but he also had a gal on the side, with the blessing of Sarah because Sarah was barren for so many years. Today that would be scandalous for anyone widely known, and for the time of Abraham, it seems like something that was accepted.

Eventually Abraham and Sarah had a son, Isaac. The delay leading up to his birth was quite long and Abraham had already fathered a child through his gal on the side. Isaac would be forty years old when he married Rebecca, and when she became pregnant, she was pregnant with twins, and God shared the details with Rebecca on why it seemed her twins were fighting with each other. God explained that two nations would come from the two children she would bare, with one being stronger than the other and the older serving the younger. When it was time for her to give birth, she named the older child, Esau, who was born red and hairy. The younger child, Jacob, grabbed hold of Esau's heel as soon as he was born, and by this time, Isaac was already sixty years old. Genesis twenty-five verse nineteen.

**Genesis 25:19-34**

**19. And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac:**

**20. And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Paddan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.**

**21. And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.**

**22. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord.**

**23. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.**

**24. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.**

**25. And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.**

**26. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.**

The children would grow into men. Esau was a skilled hunter and Jacob lived a simple life living in tents. By all outward appearances, Esau was the go-getter and Jacob was the stay-at-home person. Isaac loved the meat that Esau brought back to the family, and Rebecca loved Jacob. One day when Jacob was preparing pottage, Esau returned from the field and was famished. He asked Jacob for some pottage and Jacob told him he would not give him any unless Esau sold him his birthright. Esau considered his hunger and considered that if he died due to his hunger, his birthright would do him no good, so Esau took the deal and despised his birthright. Verse twenty-seven.

**27. And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.**

**28. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.**

**29. And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:**

**30. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.**

**31. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.**

**32. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?**

**33. And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.**

**34. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.**

Even with Esau selling his birthright, there is no record that Isaac knew of this. Isaac was still planning to pass on a greater blessing to Esau through the birthright. By this time Isaac was old and blind and asked Esau to prepare savory meat for him, so that Isaac could bless him before his death. When Esau left, he didn't take note of Rebecca who overheard the conversation, and with his blindness, Isaac could not see. Rebecca quickly made plans with Jacob to deceive Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob. While Esau was hunting meat, Rebecca and Jacob made quick work out of slaughtering some goats and preparing them like Esau would prepare. Because Esau was hairy and Jacob was not, the skin of the goats was also used by Jacob to give him the feel of being hairy. He also wore Esau's clothes. Jacob disguised to look like Esau took the meat and approached Isaac, who heard the voice of Jacob but felt the hairiness of the body, trickery brought about by the goat skin, and concluded that it was Esau before him. Genesis twenty-seven verse one.

#### **Genesis 27:1-45**

- 1. And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I.**
- 2. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:**
- 3. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison;**
- 4. And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.**
- 5. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.**
- 6. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,**
- 7. Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death.**
- 8. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.**
- 9. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:**
- 10. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.**

- 11. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man:**
- 12. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.**
- 13. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them.**
- 14. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.**
- 15. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:**
- 16. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:**
- 17. And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.**
- 18. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son?**
- 19. And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.**
- 20. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.**
- 21. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not.**
- 22. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.**
- 23. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.**
- 24. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am.**

Isaac asked the meat to be brought to him and even drank of the wine that Jacob brought, and then after smelling the clothes and confirming the scent of the fields, proclaimed the blessing of the firstborn on Jacob, thinking the blessing was being given to Esau. Verse twenty-five.

**25. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.**

**26. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.**

**27. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed:**

**28. Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:**

**29. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.**

Esau returned just as Isaac was finishing with the blessing, and this caused confusion for Isaac as he was convinced it was Esau who had been before him. If you thought conning an old person was something new done by criminals today, conning old people has been around for thousands of years and is a prominent part of this section of the history of the Old Testament. Verse thirty.

**30. And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.**

**31. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.**

**32. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.**

When Isaac realized he had been deceived, he knew he no longer had the blessing of the firstborn to give to Esau, and learning that deception would keep the birthright from him, even though he had previously sold the birthright to Jacob, Esau pleaded for a birthright blessing, and there was none to give, except that Esau's descendants would serve Jacob's descendants. Verse thirty-three.

**33. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.**

**34. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.**

**35. And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.**

**36. And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?**

**37. And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?**

**38. And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.**

**39. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;**

**40. And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.**

That act of deception caused Esau to hate Jacob to the point he wanted Jacob dead. Wanting to spare his father the pain of the loss of a child, Esau was planning to wait until after Isaac died. Rebecca heard of Esau's intentions and warned Jacob who fled to his uncle Laban who lived in Haran. Verse forty-one.

**41. And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.**

**42. And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.**

**43. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;**

**44. And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;**

**45. Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?**

Jacob, who would be the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, got that role through an act of deception. That act of deception fulfilled the prophecy that God gave Rebecca when she was still pregnant with her sons. The accounts from the

Old Testament are given to us to learn from knowing that each day we are moving closer to the return of Jesus Christ. Prior to His return, there will be perilous times with the attitudes and character of the people more extreme than what has been previously seen. If we think the Old Testament can be salacious, what will come will be pure evil and disguised as godliness. Second Timothy three verse one.

## **2 Timothy 3:1-7**

- 1. This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.**
- 2. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,**
- 3. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,**
- 4. Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;**
- 5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.**
- 6. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,**
- 7. Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, and Jacob was coached by his mother Rebecca on how to con his father to obtain the birthright blessing. We cannot be like Esau who didn't value the birthright that was his, who sold the birthright. We who are called now, cannot despise the calling we have been given, nor can we choose to give the calling we have to another person. We are reminded of the need to lay hold on eternal life. That means we do not sell it or value it as cheap. We value that blessing we have been given and firmly hold onto it. First Timothy six verse seventeen.

## **1 Timothy 6:17-19**

- 17. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;**
- 18. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;**
- 19. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**

There is no reason why we would ever trade the gift of eternal life we are offered for anything else. There is no reason that would ever make sense. Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of porridge because in his mind he was so hungry he would die. We must hold what we have because the calling we have been given is very valuable. We seek first the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness knowing God will provide our needs. Matthew six verse twenty-five.

#### **Matthew 6:25-34**

**25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?**

**26. Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?**

**27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?**

**28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:**

**29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.**

**30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?**

**31. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?**

**32. For after all these things do the Gentiles seek, for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.**

**33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

**34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.**

While the calling we have at this time is similar to being a firstborn, it is not an exact fit, because Jesus Christ is the firstborn. Paul makes that very clear in his letter to the Colossians. We do not trade the offer of eternal life we have for anything else and give honor to Jesus Christ as the firstborn. Colossians one verse nine.



### **Colossians 1:9-18**

**9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;**

**10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

**11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;**

**12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:**

**13. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:**

**14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:**

**15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:**

**16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:**

**17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.**

**18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.**

Jesus Christ is the firstborn, the firstfruits, and we who are called today follow him at His return. Between now and then, we do not trade the offer of eternal life for anything. We never discount that Jesus died and rose from the dead so that our sins could be forgiven. First Corinthians fifteen verse twelve.

### **1 Corinthians 15:12-23**

**12. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?**

**13. But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:**

**14. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.**

**15. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.**

**16. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:**

- 17. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.**
- 18. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.**
- 19. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.**
- 20. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.**
- 21. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.**
- 22. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.**
- 23. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.**

James wrote that we must live through the trials of this life never trading the faith that we have for anything. We never allow doubt to enter our mind knowing that we are a kind of the firstfruits of the spiritual harvest. Jesus was the firstborn but among all who will one day be living eternally in the Kingdom of God, we are like a kind of spiritual firstfruits. James one verse two.

#### **James 1:2-18**

- 2. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;**
- 3. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.**
- 4. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.**
- 5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.**
- 6. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.**
- 7. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.**
- 8. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.**
- 9. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:**
- 10. But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.**
- 11. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.**
- 12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.**

**13. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:**

**14. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.**

**15. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**

**16. Do not err, my beloved brethren.**

**17. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**

**18. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**

Revelation writes of the one hundred forty-four thousand as being the firstfruits unto both God and the Lamb, the very tip of the great spiritual harvest that will be finalized in the Kingdom of God. Revelation fourteen verse one.

#### **Revelation 14:1-5**

**1. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.**

**2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:**

**3. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.**

**4. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.**

**5. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.**

Knowing we never surrender what we have, knowing we never trade the gift of eternal life offered to us, we also do not remain complacent. We must grow the faith we have and develop spiritual fruit of the Holy Spirit today if we hope to be part of that spiritual harvest immediately at the return of Jesus Christ. Hebrews six verse one.

## **Hebrews 6:1-20**

- 1. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,**
- 2. Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.**
- 3. And this will we do, if God permit.**
- 4. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,**
- 5. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,**
- 6. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.**
- 7. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:**
- 8. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.**

Just like Jacob strove to receive the birthright blessing, we must strive to inherit the promises given to us. We cannot be complacent or cheapen the value of the gift that is offered to us, as the gift that is offered to us goes back full circle to Abraham, father of Isaac and grandfather to Jacob. We know it is through Jesus Christ we will attain the promises, and because we have that commitment, that conviction, that faith, we never cheapen what we have by being willing to trade it for something so trivial like a bowl of porridge. Verse nine.

- 9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.**
- 10. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.**
- 11. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:**
- 12. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

- 13. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,**
- 14. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.**
- 15. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.**
- 16. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.**
- 17. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:**
- 18. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:**
- 19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;**
- 20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.**

We know we must endure to the end to attain that hope, and as we are enduring to the end, we must remember to love one another. Esau hated Jacob for the deception he suffered even though it fulfilled the will of God. We are to love one another as we share in the blessing of eternal life. With us there is no room for hate among the faithful. John fifteen verse twelve.

#### **John 15:12-20**

- 12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.**
- 13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**
- 14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.**
- 15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.**
- 16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.**
- 17. These things I command you, that ye love one another.**

Even though there is no hate among us, we all can expect to suffer hate because just like this world hated Jesus Christ, this world will also hate us. When the world

hates us, even as unpleasant as it is, that is not a reason to trade away the offer of eternal life that we have. There is nothing in this physical world that is of greater value than the spiritual life of eternity that is to come for the faithful. Verse eighteen.

**18. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.**

**19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.**

**20. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.**

Like Paul, in the face of difficulty we press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ. When things are easy, there is no need to press toward anything. We press toward our goals when we meet resistance of any kind. Next time you are outside walking on a breezy or windy day, is it easier to walk forward with the wind at your back or in your face? You will notice that it is easier to walk forward when you have no resistance, and that when there is no resistance, there is no need to press toward anything. Philippians three verse fourteen.

### **Philippians 3:14-21**

**14. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

**15. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.**

**16. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.**

**17. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example.**

**18. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:**

**19. Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.**

**20. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:**

**21. Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.**

We press toward the mark of the prize because we value the offer of eternal life we have been given. Unlike Esau who sold his birthright for a bowl of porridge when hungry, when the going gets tough, we press toward the mark of the prize. We never surrender. We never give up. We endure to the end. We value the gift of eternal life, God's righteousness, and our place in the Kingdom of God that is on the table for each of us.

As we stay faithful, we know Jesus Christ is the firstborn among many brethren, and we also know that if God is for us no person can really be against us, unless they have a desire in wasting their time. We know that God allowed Jesus to die so that we can have this hope of eternal life, and because God offered something of great value for our benefit, as long as we do not cheapen that sacrifice, God will always be there for us. Absolutely nothing, other than a deliberate choice to abandon the faith on our part, will separate us from the love of God that is through Jesus Christ. Romans eight verse twenty-eight.

#### **Romans 8:28-39**

**28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**

**29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

**30. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**

**31. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?**

**32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**

**33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.**

**34. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**

**35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**

**36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**

**37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**

**38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,**

**39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and when we read of the account of Esau and Jacob, we see how Esau did not value his birthright, and how Jacob valued the birthright blessing so much that God allowed an act of deception to fulfill a prophecy given to Rebecca when she was pregnant with the two boys. Today, we must value the calling we have been given. We can never abandon the faith and must endure to the end, and as we value the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ which makes the gift of eternal life available to us, we know God will not allow external force to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.