**Hebrews 12:16-17**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/heb/heb-12/hebrews-1216-17/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/heb/heb-12/hebrews-1216-17/)

*Esau is an example of someone we shouldn’t imitate; someone who gave up his inheritance to satisfy a temporary appetite.*

Esau is mentioned as a counter example to the many faithful members of the “Hall of Faith” from Chapter 11. He is declared here to be an *immoral* and *godless* *person* because he sold his own birthright for a bowl of soup ([Genesis 25:29-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.29-34&t=NASB95)). Esau, as the firstborn son of Isaac, was going to *inherit the blessing* of the firstborn, which is the position of leading the family. But Esau was hungry after hunting and *sold his own birthright* to his brother Jacob simply to satisfy his hunger. He considered the reward of the inheritance he would receive much later in life to be of no value compared to satisfying his appetite today. Paul describes this attitude as “godless and immoral.”

Many years later, when Isaac was about to die, Esau regretted what he had done and wanted his inheritance back, to the point of *tears*—but it did not matter. He had squandered what was rightfully his ([Genesis 27:34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+27.34&t=NASB95)). Paul is warning the Hebrews not to be like Esau, whose god was his stomach, his fleshly appetites, who lived immorally and foolishly because he only lived for 8the moment. Later, he wanted to reap rewards, but his opportunity was gone. His time was wasted. We should be careful not to live our lives this way, giving up the inheritance that God has for us merely to satisfy an appetite. Paul exhorts us to live so that we can inherit the reward that waits for us. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, if we see the work of our lives burn up like wood, hay, and stubble ([1 Corinthians 3:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.12-15&t=NASB95)) there will be no opportunity to go back and fix it. We only have this life to walk by faith. There will be no faith in the new earth, for then we will walk by sight.

This is the message throughout the epistle; [Hebrews 2:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.1-3&t=NASB95) expresses the same warning, *For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*It is completely possible for any Christian to squander their inheritance, to live in such a way that grace is abused, the gospel is walked on like dirt, and we waste everything God gave us.

This does not mean that salvation from hell to heaven is lost, because nothing can take that away from us. Esau was still Isaac’s son, and still received a lesser blessing. But in the realm of maturation, of becoming sanctified, of running the race—we can fail by drifting away, by neglecting it, by choosing a bowl of soup over our rightful inheritance, abandoning our faith for the world. It says in 2:2 that every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, and in the case of Esau, his just penalty was the loss of his inheritance, something he later regretted, yet still chose.

Chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews highlight the Israelites in the wilderness as another example of disobedience and loss of reward. They disobeyed and therefore were not allowed to enter God’s rest, which was the land of Israel. God did not stop taking care of them, feeding them, protecting them, but they failed to inherit what was promised to them, because of their disobedience. Paul has been consistent and clear about the importance of enduring in faithful obedience toward God.

**Biblical Text:  
16 that *there be*no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single*meal. 17 For 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.**