

SERMONS  
CONCERNING  
**JACOB &  
ESAU**

DIVINE ELECTION &  
REPROBATION EXPLORED



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# **Sermons Concerning Jacob and Esau**

## **Divine Election & Reprobation Explored**

A treatise wherein every Christian may see the excellent benefits of God towards his children, and his marvelous judgments towards the reprobate, first published in the French tongue, & now Translated into English by John Fielde, For the comfort of all Christians.

Rom. 11.33. O the deepness of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.

Imprinted at London for Thomas Man and Tobie Cooke. 1579.

by John Calvin

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[To the Right Honorable and my very good Lord](#)

[The First Sermon Concerning Jacob and Esau - Genesis 25:12-22](#)

[The Second Sermon Concerning Jacob and Esau - Genesis - 25:20-22](#)

[The Third Sermon of Jacob and Esau - Genesis 25:21-22](#)

[The Fourth Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 25:24-28](#)

[The Fifth Sermon of Jacob and Esau - Genesis 25:29-34](#)

[The Sixth Sermon of Jacob and Esau - Genesis 26: 1-5](#)

[The Seventh Sermon of Jacob and Esau - Genesis 26: 6-10](#)

[The Eighth & Ninth Sermon of Jacob and Esau - Genesis 26: 11-21](#)

[The Tenth Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 26: 26- Genesis 27:2](#)

[The Eleventh Sermon of Jacob and Esau - Genesis 27: 3-9](#)

[The Twelfth Sermon of Jacob and Esau - Genesis 27:13-21](#)

[The Thirteenth Sermon of Jacob and Esau - Genesis 27: 31-38](#)

[An Answer to certain slanders and blasphemies](#)

## **To the right Honorable and my very good Lord,**

the Earl of Bedford, one of her Majesty's most honorable privy Council, and to the Honorable, godly, and virtuous Lady, the Countess his wife: John Fielde wishes increase of godliness and constancy by Jesus Christ forever. AMEN.

Because I cannot (my very good Lord and Lady, whom the Lord, I say by the profession of his glorious Gospel, has made right Honorable) by any other means testify the duty that I owe you, but in such poor sort as this is, I most humbly beseech you to accept of it. Look not

upon it as it is in itself: but value it according to the hearty affection of the giver, who with all duty protests his humble service towards your Honor, to the uttermost that he shall be able for the advancement of your knowledge, increase of godliness and spiritual gain, in the true practice of God's blessed and holy truth, the greatest benefit that ever God in mercy could have bestowed upon you. I am sorry that my skill is no better, to help you forward in that so excellent a work: but forasmuch as God accepts us according to that measure we have received, I hope you of your Honorable courtesy, will likewise take it well, that I show this remembrance of you in presenting such a present as he has bestowed upon me. And this I will say: though in respect of my labor it be homely, yet in respect of the matter it is most excellent: a work of one of the rarest instruments whom God has raised up, in these last times to give light amidst our great ignorance, & to draw many to that blessed knowledge, which I beseech God we may both thankfully accept of: & also diligently conform ourselves with all obedience, to live according to it: that the Lord do not either take this blessing from us, or else bring upon us severe judgments, for abusing so excellent a treasure.

I know some unthankful wretches, puffed up with pride & a vain opinion of themselves, will hardly endure that I should speak thus either of the work, or of this singular instrument of God. For the nature of men's corruption is such, and especially of such as seek to be magnified one of another, that they tread under their feet God's glory: and being behind others in gifts, they pout and swell against them whose shoe latches they are not worthy to loose: Besides that they are so corrupt, either being open Papists, counterfeit professors, or manifest heretics, that they can abide no sincerity. Of the first sort I will not say much, because now I mind not at large to dispute with them, as being the open & hopeless enemies of God (I mean the obstinate ones) who set themselves not only against his servants, but

against his holy word. For what should a man say to such, whom nothing can please, but that they have received either from their own brains, or else from their sottish doctors, who are destitute of all truth & godliness? What they tell them, be it never so silly, nay so false, they will receive with all greediness: No Legend so lying, no opinion so gross, no motive so light, no life so villainous, as they will not accept of, maintain & defend, both with tooth & nail, if it come from themselves & from their own polshorne generation. But alack it should be otherwise, if they would be content to have all things tried by that undeceivable touchstone that God has appointed: If the everlasting word of God which of right (proceeding from God) ought to have his preeminence of perfection to judge all) did bear the bell, as also God has appointed it should do, this matter would be soon at an end. For whatever building should be found, either in the one or the other, that had not his foundation therein, it should quickly vanish, & every man's work should appear. But if men will come with prejudicate minds, to be admirers of men's Persons, & will only look to a personal & local succession and be carried away with the empty & bare titles of their names and professions, without examination of that they bring, men shall easily offend both in the one and in the other. Let all men therefore be examined, let the word of God discuss according to her prerogative: when God speaks let all men hold their peace, and if he teach, let all flesh be confounded.

In matters of faith and religion, let that word only be heard which is the true instructor, having been set down by men as writers, yet by the holy ghost the true inditer, who came not to suggest a piece, & so to leave an imperfect work, but to lead us into all truth, & to teach us whatsoever was necessary for our salvation; not leaving things doubtfully to be received from hand to hand by way of tradition, but plainly written to remain to all the sons of God as God's sufficient & perpetual Testament.

Fy upon these blasphemous mouths that will accuse God of infidelity, of cruelty of lack of care to his Church in providing for his: that like high traitors dare clip & adulterate his coin, wringing the scepter of his kingdom out of his hand, & bounding his government to some one people, city & country, as did the Donatists: challenging to themselves with the old Chatarists, and new Anabaptists and such as are of the Family of love, that they cannot err, when the most of their Popes (and specially such as followed him that proudly to show himself Antichrist, challenged the name of universal Bishop) were Sorcerers, Conjurers, Whoremongers and incestuous livers, Heretics, Murderers, Sodomites, covetous Harlots, and cruel blasphemers in all their doings.

I stand not to cite the places out of their own stories, they are manifest, and all the world may know them. And as for their Councils they were nothing but wranglings and repeals one of another's Laws and Canons: their customs drawn from men's errors, and therefore (as Cyprian says) being without truth, though they were never so old, are but old errors.

And yet we leave the fountain, and go to the stinking puddles that they have digged unto themselves: we must leave the light of God, and go to the darkness of men: the instruction of the holy Ghost, & rest upon these Dunces, that know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, The word of God must be drawn in and out by them as they think good, and therefore they speak most despitefully of it.

They call it a dead letter, a nose of Wax, a Shipman's hose, a School mistress of error, dark, hard, insufficient of itself, and I cannot tell what. And yet as I said, if anything come from their Dunces, they receive it and never distrust it. The name of a Catholic is enough to authorize unto them any thing be it never so false, absurd, peevish

and contrary to the known and express truth of God. They cry the Church, the Church, no otherwise than crafty strumpets that will most scold for their honesty, when they never came where it grew.

And then they brabble with us about the translation, O it is corrupted, it is not according to the Hebrew text, & to discredit that which makes most against them: besides that, they forbid the people the reading of it, they bear the world in hand, that they have observed so many and so many faults, when all men of learning and judgment know that the time wherein their errors were most palpable & rife, all kind of good learning was worn out, the knowledge of tongues decreased, they whom they most spited were the lighters of their Candles before all the world.

For to themselves Hebrew letters though (as they say) they were as big as Oaks, yet they were Pitchforks and staples: and as for Greek, they were so far from understanding of it, that not one amongst a thousand could read it. I speak not of the latter times, for now good learning being brought to light, with the knowledge of the Gospel many of them have tinderred their Candles at our lights, and many (thanks be to God) are converted, and more should be, had not God in his justice for their wicked Rebellion made the means fruitless, reserving them to a farther judgment.

But let us see, where they ever amended anything they blamed. Their common translation has been amended by us, to which yet so obstinate they are, that all upon pain of the black curse in their conspiracy of Trent, must be bound only to hold themselves: when as in many places for their lives, they are not able to make any construction or sense of it. But the obscurer it was, the better liked of them, and the more to their profit: and therefore they kept it under &

forbade the reading of it, lest the light thereof should discover their faults and filthy corruptions.

And this is the principal cause that Calvin and such notable men are so ill liked, and with such violence condemned amongst them. But what should good men look for other of these blind Balamites, but such condemnation? The other sort are those, that having once tasted of the sweet doctrine of the Gospel, are yet through an indisciplinate kind of life, being also devoid of true humility, carried away from the sincerity of the truth, some slugging still in dark ignorance, and folding themselves in their own persuasions, believing nothing but that which they can compass, & receiving nothing but that which stands to the liking of their humors & graveled consciences, following like Swine their own beastly and carnal appetites.

These men would be awakened. And when the Lord shall open their eyes, they shall see that the profession of the gospel of God, consists not in a bare confession, they shall find that the counsel of God in part reveals itself, by our vocation: which also is from him, & then they shall know themselves to be effectually called, when they find sanctification as a continual companion in them: which is approved and known by mortifying the old Adam in us, and by quickening the inward man, in that daily reparation that makes us as dear Children to resemble our heavenly father.

Indeed we shall come short in the perfection thereof, but he that is perfect shall supply our wants, both strengthening us to will and perform what soever is good, & also perfecting in himself that which is imperfect in us. These men would be warned not to abuse the Gospel of grace, and the glad tidings of their everlasting salvation to their own perdition: who while they speak of Christ should endeavor

to know him as he is: that his bare name deceive them not, to lull them asleep in sin, and while they seek to comfort the oppressed, should likewise take heed that they strengthen not the wicked, to continue in their cursed security and fleshly liberty.

It is very true that in Christ we have all things, but Christ with all his riches only belongs to his children, and to them he is applied with all his benefits, through a true and lively faith: and he has sundry offices, to which, his must submit themselves. They must acknowledge his kingdom to be ruled by his word, and they must be subject to his law, who has thoroughly and continually provided for their government. They must rest in that which he teaches, because he is their only Prophet, their only Priest, in whose only sacrifice the father is pacified and well pleased. And Christ is the mark to whom the law leads, the end and perfection thereof, that they in him should walk in obedience.

The last sort which are as ill as the worst, I mean either open or else close and crafty Heretics, they can as ill brook the sincere word of God as any of the others, bleating also against his government and discipline, because it restrains, corrects and bridles their heretical opinions and manners. They allege overmuch severity, continually abusing his mercy, and like fantastical wretches, because they would be left to themselves to spew out their heresies, they continually bark against this wholesome correction and holy obedience.

These fellows pick many quarrels, making it subject to the inconstant wills of Popes and ignorant Princes, as though it were a Shipman's hose, to be altered and changed at their pleasure. But alack they do but catch the wind in a net: For it must needs be that Christ's scepter bruise them, and it prevail. And especially they cannot abide such

men as this good Calvin was, because he rubbed them on the gaul, and broke even the skull (as I may say) of their heretical corruptions.

For some of them are Arians, other some Anabaptists, and Servetus, Davidians and Sylvanists, Pelagians, & Freewill men, Libertines and of the Family of Love, joining with them infinite heresies, and secretly in this security of the Church, disperse their poison, which I fear me, will one day so break forth when we least think of it, to the trouble of the whole Church of God, that it will be a long time or ever it be purged and appeased.

I would to God there were none in England, I would to God they had fewer favorers, and we more judgment and zeal to defend the sincere truth of our God, then should they not give such evident tokens of the venom that is within them, in defending Servetus that Dog that hath renewed all the old heresies of the Arians, that so much troubled the Church in time past: neither would they themselves in their own fantasies with such impudence condemn the dear servants of God, for procuring and calling upon the magistrate for his lawful execution against Heretics and poisoners of the Church.

They would not make a mash & hotchpotch of the civil and ecclesiastical state, and so jumble them together. They would not deny the power of the magistrate's sword, committed to his ministers not in vain, but to be used in cutting off the rotten members thereof, for the preservation of the whole body. They would not bark so like Dogs against the everlasting predestination and election of God, the most comfortable doctrine that can be, being the foundation of all the rest, where it is wisely taught according to the word, and learned within that sober compass that it is prescribed: joining and jumping so near with Anabaptists, the spiritual illuminate, Pelagians, and other merit mongers, who however they differ in some particular

marks, yet are birds of one and the same feather. This shall always be found true that they follow the corruptest men of our age in all these matters. But whatever they say, God's truth is of sufficient power to overcome all their heretical blasphemies. Moses' rod shall devour their Sorcerers' serpents. Dagon shall break his neck where his truth is received. And this sun arising shall scatter all their darkness. These excellent instruments shall live when they shall be forgotten, unless it be in immortal shame & opprobry. Let us not therefore be discouraged but hold fast the truth of our good God, & with fear and reverence, let us seek after those things he hath revealed unto us. There can be no danger if we keep ourselves within the compass of the holy Scriptures. For this doctrine of God's eternal election and Predestination is most comfortable.

O, but say they with the old Heretics, if I be elected and predestinated, what need I to avoid evil works, they shall neither further nor hinder me: God is sure and what need I torment and vex myself to do well & to lead a straight and a godly life, we like not these peppered consciences! Such heretics there were long ago that so wrote and taught that occasioned Saint Augustine to write that excellent work of the Predestination of God's Saints, confuting such caitiffs as these. Saint Augustine therefore answers them, that this doctrine is a most comfortable doctrine, necessary to be known, to be published and preached to the people in his due time and place. For it is that same everlasting and unchangeable decree of GOD, whereby he has undoubtedly determined in the time that he himself best knows, to call his elect to the knowledge of his truth, that his mercy and glory might be declared in them. And this has the Scripture confirmed Rom. 8. verse. 30. Whom he has predestinated those he has called, and whom he has called those he has justified. And again in the first Chapter to the Ephesians, we are elected before the foundations of the world, and in the 9th to the Romans speaking of

Esau and Jacob (of whom these Sermons especially intreat) he says that one was elected and the other rejected before they had done either good or evil. The foundation hereof, is only the purpose of his will: not foreseeing (as the Papists say) any worthiness or unworthiness of man: but for just causes known to himself, & in himself not in us in which without further inquiry we ought to rest, acknowledging him to be only good, wise, & most righteous, who is & shall be blessed and justified forever.

Now for them that are either rejected or elected, we wade no farther to judge of them than may appear by the effects, neither do we judge absolutely of them, but with condition unless upon those peculiar lost ones of whom God himself in his word hath pronounced. Read Ephesians 1. & 1 Peter 1. Now if any Potsherd will reason with the potter, which not resting in his will, would wade further to know the secret causes of this, we say unto him with the Apostle: O wretched man who art thou that disputest with God. Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?

For further satisfaction in this question, I refer all Christians to the Books that are written hereof, & namely to these excellent Sermons: M. Knox hath learnedly answered the objections of the adversaries in a Book printed at Geneva. We have also home writers, that have dealt fully and plainly therein, as Veron of Predestination, and M. Crowley in his book against Cerberus, rightly so called for his barking blasphemies, against this most comfortable and excellent doctrine: others that are learned may further satisfy themselves, with those learned answers of M. Beza against that impure Apostate Castalio.

And now to return to your Honours, I most humbly beseech you to accept my poor labours, which I offer under your Honours' names to the whole Church of God. And I beseech your honours, as God has

called you to the knowledge of his glorious Gospel, which is a token of your election, so go forward more and more in the growth thereof: that the Gospel being truly rooted in your hearts, it may bring forth sanctification, the true seal of your adoption, that you may feel his goodness in the assurance of that everlasting and blessed inheritance. God has called you to high honor, not so much by your places & calling amongst men (which yet is somewhat, because it is a great benefit of God) but in that he has made you his adopted children, it is that you should show obedience, in that he has made you heirs with his son, and Citizens with his Saints, it is that you should look up to Heaven and have your joy there despising this world, and living to righteousness and true holiness. And this will the Lord in mercy bestow upon you, thereby sealing your election, if you separate yourselves from the corruption of the world: I say not that you should go out of the world, but that you should depart from evil, and be followers of God as dear children, walking in love, even as he has loved you. Beware of these two Cankers that corrupt the whole world, and is most likely to assail Nobility, I mean Pride and Covetousness, Let them not once be named amongst you as becomes Saints. A day will come, when the Lord will fulfill your hope in better things than all this world can give you. Stand fast in his truth in these slippery days, and above all things let his glory, and the advancement of his word, be dear and precious unto you. In God's matters, let his will be the rule thereof, and not your own wisdom and affections. Examine yourselves often by it, and neglect not holy exercises. Let other Gallants of this world, follow their foolish and fading pleasures, delight you in his law, and be good examples to others. Care not for the contempt of the world, but hold fast a good conscience that you may be approved before GOD. The Lord Jesus bless you both, that as he has knit you together, so you may draw on forwards in one yoke towards his kingdom, that that may be your aim and mark in all your deeds, words, and thoughts. Amen.

October 25. 1579.

Your Honours most humble and faithful ever to command in Christ,

John Fielde.

## **The first Sermon of Mr. John Calvin concerning Jacob and Esau.**

Genesis. Chap. 25. verse 12. NOW these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar, the Egyptian Sarah's handmaid, bore unto Abraham, etc. To the end of verse 22.

WE have here to consider the difference that Moses puts between the Children of Abraham. We have seen already that the whole stock which he had by Keturah, dwelled in a country far off. Concerning Ishmael he is separated far enough from the land of Canaan notwithstanding he be yet as one rejected. For it was necessary that the inheritance which was ordained to Isaac, should remain to him.

Now in the first place it is said, that Ishmael had twelve sons, the which in such sort multiplied, that of them came twelve Peoples. In this we see that God not without cause said to his servant Abraham, that for his sake Ishmael also should have a certain blessing: but that it should be transitory and fleeting, and the principal should remain to Jacob. But whatsoever it be: yet so it is, that God did show himself faithful and true in his promise, the which belongs to this temporal life.

If God would that his truth and constancy should be known in these things of the world, which slip away, and have nothing else but a figure which vanishes, as S. Paul says: what shall it be, when the promises are of far greater importance, as when he calls us to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven? Think we then that we can be frustrated of that, staying ourselves upon him?

See then how we must make our profit of this place. If God will be known firm and faithful in his word towards those which are as strangers, and which he has shut out and rejected from his church: what will he then do towards us which are his children, whom he has adopted, and to whom it has pleased him to show himself near? For if God in small things, as in the stock, and in all other things of like sort, will have his truth known? What shall it be, when in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, he sets out unto us the inheritance of heaven, and declares unto us that he will be merciful unto us, and that he will pardon our faults, that we may be reconciled to him, and that by this means we may be the brethren and companions of Angels, under one head, to wit, our Lord Jesus Christ?

Can God there fail in his promises? Shall they be void and without effect and execution? It is impossible. This then is that we have to hold in this first place.

And further we have next to note, that God will manifest himself not only to us in these his benefits, which are most great and excellent, but also in those that concern this life: and that there is nothing so small, in which he will not have some marks of his fatherly goodness imprinted. And forasmuch as he has said that he will have care to feed us, let us wait upon him, for all that which belongs to the maintenance of this life, and let us not think that it derogates any

whit from his majesty, in that he will have us to call upon him for drink and for food to feed upon.

For he will that in all and through all we should have our recourse to him: let us not then doubt but that God (albeit our bodies be earth and ashes, rottenness and worms' meat, and as the common speech is, but carrions, which are nothing worth) will yet notwithstanding provide for all our corporal necessities. This is that we have to add as the second point.

But now we must here see the comparison, which Moses makes between Ishmael and Isaac. Behold Ishmael which is cut off, and is no more reputed among the children of God, and yet notwithstanding we see that he prospers, and that he has a great train. For of twelve sons which he has begotten, behold twelve peoples that came from him.

And with all of Isaac, what? Isaac married at forty years old: and after that his wife was barren, and that not for one year, nor for two, but even for twenty years' space, he had no children. God had said unto him: I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea. This was pronounced to his father Abraham: but this was of special favor toward him. But he might have been before this time increased, as he hoped, notwithstanding he saw that his wife was barren, and it seemed as though God minded to mock him, and declare unto him that thing which he hoped for, was nothing worth.

When therefore he saw that his brother Ishmael, who had no root in the church, who was a stranger from all hope of salvation: when he saw him (I say) to flourish in his seed, and it seemed that God had poured forth all his graces upon him: and in the meantime, that he was left in his own house all alone, and had none to succeed him: it is

certain that he might be in great perplexity, as if it had been much better for him to have been like his brother Ishmael.

This was to make him give over all, & after to be without hope, and to have contemned God: he had fallen even to the uttermost extremity, if he had not been held in by a singular patience. Now then, we have here to behold as in a glass, the condition of God's Church, how it begins, & how God upholds it, and multiplies it, that is to say, after so strange a fashion, that it seems at all assays, that that same appearance which God shall have given us, is nothing (as a man would say) but to deceive us. For (instead that the children of this world have a goodly show, & a man shall find them to increase to the eye) the church shall be hidden under the Earth: a man shall see the earth full replenished of unbelievers, of contempters of God and profane people: and where shall a man find the faithful? They shall be very thinly sown and a man shall not be able to perceive them, they shall be despised, men shall tread them almost under their feet, and men shall think that God has no care of his Church, and that further he takes pleasure that the wicked should make their triumphs, and should have their brave & pompous shows.

Now then this is showed unto us in the persons of Isaac & of Ishmael, to the end that the strangeness of it trouble us not beyond measure, and that we should fight constantly against all doubtings which might arise in our imagination, as often as we do see a small number of people who worship God, & that we see almost an infinite number of those who stubbornly set themselves against him, and who know not what it means to bear his yoke. Now, this doctrine is very necessary for us at this day.

For how does God work in our time? For when he meant to rear up again his Gospel, at what end began he? What people called he? And

yet now, if we cast our eye upon the whole world, we shall find in the first place, that in Asia (which is the greatest part thereof) all is disordered and confused, and that there, there is nothing but superstitions on the one side, and so unruly barbarousness on the other, as pity it is to behold. Mark also the other part of the world, to wit, Africa, which is in the same order. And as concerning Europe (which men call Christendom) let a man behold that which is in Italy, in France, and other places, and a man shall find that the Devil bears there the sway, and that the upholders of Antichrist, who are deadly enemies of the Church, what profession soever they make, a man shall see them to be as the Stars of Heaven, and as the sand of the sea: so as a man might say that there is nothing but for their use. And indeed they are very skillful to make their vaunt thereof: for they make a buckler of this to contemn God, and also to harden themselves in their rebellion.

They mock and deride us for this, that we are so few people, and that notwithstanding we will be held for the Church. But for our part we are despised & rejected: and moreover, we are far off from approaching to this great people, which advance themselves against us: To be short, a man would say, that we are as three grains of Corn under a great heap of Chaff. And yet for all this, it is so, that we have this testimony of God, that he keeps us and avows us to be his household servants. For it is no Church, unless it be joined to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head thereof. When this fails; all the rest goes to wrack and to ruin, as Saint Paul says: Now we are united to the Son of God, through the faith of his Gospel, which is the certain and undecievable bond.

And how shall we judge that we are the Church, seeing that we are nothing in comparison of the unfaithful, who are puffed up by reason of their greatness, and of all their other qualities, which they know

well enough how to set out with full mouth? But let not us be astonished for all this, seeing that God has given us an allowance in the person of our father Isaac, that the Church was as a forsaken house, and that he had no stock, and that he had not a great number of people, and yet for all that he ceased not to hold it as a hidden treasure: let us content ourselves herewith.

And now for that which followeth, the person of Ishmael ought also to be well marked: for he came out from the house of Abraham, which at that time was the only Church in the whole world: he bore also circumcision, as if he had been an inheritor of the kingdom of God: yea, he was the firstborn, and had the swinge in the house, yea, in so much that he mocked his brother, as we have seen already. Now it is even so likewise at this day concerning the Papists: for they are not strangers from the church, but they are as bastard children. They will say also that they have antiquity on their side, and they went before us: & we see how they trust in their succession which they have from the Apostles (as they say:) that at all times there have been Bishops & prelates in their church, & that hereupon a man might certainly conclude, that the title of the church belongs to them. And yet for all this they are but bastards as Ishmael was, forasmuch as they were not begotten by the gospel as we have heard, which is the seed of freedom: but have corrupted themselves. Behold, how we may account them for Ishmaelites. For albeit they be great peoples, & that we in the meantime remain as poor untimely fruits, yet let us know that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us such an example thereof, that at this day we might not be ashamed.

This then to be short, is that we have here to remember. And hereto we ought also to apply that which we read in the prophets. For it is not for once that this happened, that the Church has been brought to a small number, yea & that it had nothing but horrible desolation in

it: as in the time of the captivity of Babylon, what was it? For thereupon it is said: by Isaiah. Rejoice, O barren that did not bear: break forth into joy and rejoice, you that did not travail with Child: For the desolate has more Children than all the married wives: Although you have been as a widow, God shall multiply you, and you shall be a people, as it were by miracle, and above the judgment and opinion of men, and when you shall have stretched out your Pavilions here and there, all shall be filled and replenished.

When therefore we hear that this is spoken to the Church, let us know that if God at this day to humble us or to punish our offenses, does diminish the number of them that call upon him: we must not therefore quail, but rather follow always our vocation without any astonishment at all. And further let us note that we see (specially in the state of the church) that which is spoken of in the 113th Psalm: That God fills the houses of those that were barren before, with goodly Children and a great offspring. Let us wait then till our Lord does his work, and then we shall have occasion to glorify him, knowing that it is not in vain that he has said: that Abraham's seed shall be multiplied: but that this must come after such a sort as is incomprehensible unto us, & that the beginnings are small, & as it were nothing. When then we shall have this patience, it is certain that God will work in such sort, as we shall have always whereby to be confirmed in his promises, seeing that the effect shall show itself, yea and more than we could have thought or wished for.

Furthermore this we have to mark here in this place. But there is another difficulty: to wit, that although Ishmael be so advanced, that he sees so many successors as is wonderful, (for he lived an hundred, thirty and seven years, and had twelve sons) & might see a people already descended of his stock. Although for a time he were so lifted up, yet within a while after he was as one taken away: For Moses

indeed rehearses those children he had, but when he speaks thereof in the holy history, they are rejected and have no fellowship with that true stock of Abraham which was blessed: even so let us note that it is nothing to have like authority, and to have a great show, and goodly hue among men, & to be in reputation, namely so as men wonder at us, yet all this is worth nothing in comparison of the durable state of the Church.

God sets up his house in such a way that it seems as a play of little Children: notwithstanding the foundations are perpetual. And further he continues his grace, in such a way; that a man may very well see, that it is he who is the founder of his Church, who builds, finishes, and upholds it. This plainly appears: yet the unbelievers have their discourses and determinations: in such a way, that they are as the grass which grows upon the house tops, like as it is said in the 129th Psalm: The corn shall be trodden under feet, and men cast it into the earth, & it remains there in a low place, and in the meantime, behold the grass which shall grow very high upon the house tops: but in as much as it is nearer to the Sun it takes no root: so that it must needs wither, in such a way that there comes no fruit of it, as the Prophet there shows. Even so then, when we see that the Lord keeps us in this poor and low condition, and that not only we are despised, but as it were utterly rejected of all: let us know, that it ought to suffice us, that we have a root in our God, to live by his grace forever: that we are maintained by him, and that we are as a tree planted by the river's side, which always shall be moistened with water to draw out nourishment therefrom. Let us content ourselves herewith. And so this comparison is not made without cause, when Moses expressly says that Ishmael begat twelve sons, which were gathered into twelve peoples, & after that, he stays there, and so leaves them. Further he says: Behold the generations of Isaac.

And why? It is for that his wife was barren, until that he was come to the age of 60 years. Behold a wonderful thing, yea but we shall find, that after God had ratified his promise, to wit, that he should be multiplied in such a way, as he had showed unto him, that he had not spoken in vain. For what was it to see such a multitude of people in Egypt, as if grass had grown in the midst of a hot burning Oven? For this was as a furnace, (as the scripture speaks) which was the tyranny & bondage of Egypt. Behold the people as chaff, and see the fire which is kindled in every place all about, and yet for all this the people is not consumed, like as is showed in the figure of the Bush, which was as it were burning on a light fire, and yet the bush remained whole and was not consumed. We see likewise how the people multiplied, being under such oppression and anguish, that then was not only question of an hundred thousand, or of three or four hundred thousand, but behold six hundred thousand issuing out under such a captivity. And how was this possible? Behold a miracle to ravish us in astonishment. Now then let us know, that as God after this manner tried the faith and patience of Isaac, so in the end he found a means to accomplish his promise, yea beyond the reach of man. For this came to pass after a strange fashion, & which a man would not have thought. Let us also at this day apply this to ourselves, and let us practice that which is spoken in the 37th Psalm. If we see the wicked & the contemners of God to be advanced as the Cedars of Lebanon, let us wait: for there needs no more, but even to turn our eyes, and lo, they are razed & cut off, and one shall not see so much as the place where they were. And why so? Because they were not planted in God. We hear that which our Lord Jesus Christ says, Matthew 15. Every plant which my heavenly father has not planted shall be rooted up.

So let us not envy the Children of this world, when we shall see them in high estate, when we shall see them advanced to nobility and to

dignity, and in all other things: let us wait patiently and learn our condition peaceably: and if the world does mock us, make no account of us, and disdain us, let it suffice us notwithstanding to be esteemed before God and his Angels. And in the meantime let us wait, till God accomplish that he has spoken in another place, The righteous shall flourish like a Palm tree, and shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon: yea, after another fashion: for he says, he shall be multiplied in the courts of the house of the Lord. When it is said, that they shall be planted in the house of God, that is to say, they shall be blessed of him: For, behold also wherein our continual felicity consists, so as from age to age, we may always stand fast, as it is said in the 112th Psalm. That inasmuch as God abides forever one, & changes not as does the world which waxes old and grows in corruption: but that God is always like himself: The Prophet thereupon concludes, that the faithful shall have their abiding: and that albeit at the first blush a man see not that the grace of God is showed upon them, yet in the end, it shall be known.

This therefore hitherto is what we have to learn from this place, and from this difference which Moses puts here between the stock of Ishmael, & that of Isaac. Behold these beginnings of the church which are as a thing of nothing, but the finishing thereof is wonderful. Now the beginnings of the children of this world are mighty and noble, and such as astonish all men: but all comes to nothing. And why so? Because they have no continuing in the promise of God. This is the fountain of life: and behold how we may continue to the end: this also is the means to make us to be advanced above the world. For when the question is, of our rejoicing in God, and of contenting ourselves with his fatherly goodness, that he has showed unto us, Let us not be as fools to busy ourselves about that which we now see with the eye: For these present things of the world

pass away and vanish: but let us behold that which is invisible, as the true nature of Faith is, as the Apostle says. Now Moses adds,

That Ishmael dwelt over against his brethren, or in their presence. It is true that one has translated this to dwell, and the word imports to fall: but it signifies to rest, to dwell, and to have a house. This then is the true and natural meaning, that Ishmael was not far off (as already we have seen) from the children of Keturah, but that he remained a near neighbour of the land of Canaan, which was promised to Isaac: notwithstanding this is true also, that he possessed not that land there, for it was meet that he should be barred from thence. And who is it that had driven him thence? For after the death of Abraham, it is certain, that he might have tarried there if he would. Isaac had nothing but the Sepulchre which his father had gotten: he was not led thence to have any great and large possessions: he had nothing, unless it were altogether borrowed and by the leave of the inhabitants.

Ishmael therefore might well have made his abode and nest there, if he had listed. But he went from thence: was this to obey GOD? No, For he was full of pride & rebellion. So he would rather have blasphemed God, when he had thought I am here put apart, as though I were not of my father's house. Therefore I must stay myself in the country where I was born. But God does lead him thither without his knowledge, wherefore he goes thither, yea by a secret inspiration. See how God works towards the unbelievers: he turns them, he winds them from one side to another.

We do not see apparently that it is so: but we must by faith consider therein a providence of GOD, and if we were very attentive therein, it is certain that we should have proof of that which is here written and that daily. For how is it that we are not destroyed of these mad

beasts, which compass us on every side? We see what their cruelty is, and how insatiable they are in their covetousness: Whereupon then stays it, that we are not all swallowed up: but that God turns away their fury, and that he knows how to direct them as seems good unto him? he will make them sometimes to push one another: further he keeps them there as Lions that are enchained and holden within Iron bars. See then how God also at this day drives and chases the unbelievers, where he will without violence at least, so as they perceive it not, even as he did that at time with Ishmael. For we have already declared, that he desired nothing more than to overthrow and abolish the promise of God, which was made unto Isaac, & yet for all that he goes not about it. And why so? Because it was not permitted unto him from above, and because God does place him there in a dwelling out of the way, saying, Thou shalt dwell near thy brethren: but howsoever it be, thou shalt not hinder, but that they shall enjoy the region which I have assigned unto them for an inheritance. But he speaks specially of Brethren, & yet for all that he had none but Isaac: this is to show that God had no regard to one or to two, when he so shut up Ishmael: but as if the people had already inhabited the land of Canaan: the people I say, which was not yet born, yea, which was not born a long time after.

This is the sum of what we have further to note here. Now upon this, we may be confirmed and strengthened, as often as we see the wicked and contemners of God (who are so deadly enemies to us) to cast out their froth, in that we know that our Lord can stay and hold them in well enough, and that he will turn them some other way, and when it shall seem that they are to cast and banish us out of the world, that our Lord will hold them as captives, albeit they know not how. To be short, this that is here set out of Ishmael, we shall have trial of, so that we be patient, & call upon God, and nothing doubt,

but that he hath means of his own in himself to save us, the which we at the first perceive not.

But now let us come to that which Moses recites concerning Isaac. It is true that thereof he had already spoken some thing, but it is requisite that it be deducted more at large. He has said, That Isaac was forty years old, when he took Rebecca to wife, & further that she was barren. Now it is likely that Ishmael was married sooner. For we have already seen that Hagar his mother had given him a wife, without mention of his age, and a man may well gather that he was then very young. Isaac comes to the age of forty years and might already be enfeebled before he entered into marriage. See then how he was kept back. Now let us note that all this while passed not, but he often entered into reckoning, to inquire of this promise, which was made unto him, that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of Heaven and the sand of the sea, and all this while he found no wife, for he dared not take one in the country. And it is like that God showed him that he would keep her barren even till the end. But yet when he was married, it seems that then at the least God would bless him, and increase and augment him in his stock. But his wife is barren, yea by the space of twenty years. If any such temptation should come unto any of us, it is certain that the best of us should hardly resist it one day: we lightly pass over that which is here recited by Moses. And why so? It is because we are not exercised with many conflicts, yea and because we shun them, and also by reason of infirmity and rudeness. Nevertheless we ought to make our profit of such examples, when we come to any entry or trial of our faith, we are altogether undone. And why? Because in time and place we are not so fenced as were necessary.

Now it is said here, that for the space of twenty years it seemed that Isaac was accursed of God, and that he was in a manner a dead stock,

and that he had no hope of having any children during the space of twenty years. For here is not question of having children only. As when men and women do marry, they will be glad to have children: And this is also a token of God's favor, but here was a special reason in Isaac. For he waited not only for the people that should descend of him, but he waited for the salvation of the world. See then Jesus Christ, which is after a sort in his reins, as the Apostle says, for he uses the same manner of speech there. Isaac saw that he was barren, and yet he had no other hope to be saved, he is as it were a cursed creature, and as it were at the pit's brink, except he have issue: and all this while, that God which had made promise thereof in the person of his father, seemeth to mock him & leaveth him there, where he must needs languish: and that as often as he beheld his wife he might thus think with himself, Lo, a glass, wherein I see that God has rejected us, and that he makes no account of us, and that he has turned his back towards us, that his promise is frustrate, that it has no force or efficacy towards us.

See (I say) how Isaac had daily to bear with such assaults: and we ought well to weigh all these things (as I have already said:) but forasmuch as we do not regard to what end the Holy Ghost speaks unto us of Isaac, and because we know not how to apply that to our instruction which is here spoken of him: see why it ought to make us lose no courage at all: but when there is but one blast of wind, by and by we are beaten down. And why so? for we ought to have thought thus on this sort. Go to, how is it that Isaac has so firm constancy, and that for the space of twenty years? he quailed not, albeit, it seemed to him that God had mocked him: this was because that he was patient, and because he knew, it behooved him not to set God the time wherein he had to perform his promise: but that he must submit himself to him and do him this honor to know that his works are incomprehensible, and that he knows the fit times and seasons,

to perform that he has pronounced: to be short, that it is not our part to set him a law: but that it is meet that we keep silence, and that we murmur not, if things fall not out according to our appetite and desire: but that we must wait till he accomplishes his own works, yea, although we see all things contrary. Nevertheless, it behooves that our faith prevail against all the world, even as Saint John says in his Canonical Epistle.

Now in as much as all this is nothing, and it vanishes from before our eyes: and when we read this history, it is so coldly done, that we receive no fruit by it. See, also why God punishes us for our ingratitude: because we are so delicate, that as soon as there comes, not a storm or some great whirlwind, but a little puff, behold we are forthwith shaken, and in the end do fall away.

So much the rather then it behooves that we mark well that which is here spoken: to wit, that Isaac continued to trust in God, although that by the space of twenty years, it seemed that he could have no issue. Now that he persevered, it appears by that which Moses says.

For Isaac prayed unto the Lord for his wife, and was heard, so as his wife conceived. When it is said, that he prayed to the Lord, we must not think that he only waited till that time was accomplished: but seeing that his wife was barren, he had his recourse to God, which was the only remedy. What? seems it then that he lost his time, and that he cast his prayers in the air, and that they never came to God's ears? For a man would say so. For if he had been heard, would not God then have declared by experience, that which he had promised him? But he saw nothing of all that. Then when Isaac had prayed one year, and twain: it is all one, as if he had spoken to a Rock or to a wall: God making wise as though he were deaf: that is to say, he showed not himself in any sort to have a favorable care to receive

Isaac's requests: and this continued. But when this comes unto the end of ten or twelve years, what would a man say, but that it were better to give over? For this is a marvelous hard and great temptation, that God should do nothing of that that he had promised at the end of fifteen years, But although he had put off to do it even to the twentieth year, yet nevertheless Isaac ceased not to pray, but always continued, and his prayer was a sure seal of his faith. For he prayed not after the manner of the unbelievers, which ever wait to rage against God: but he followed the rule that is given us by Saint Paul (although it was not yet written). And that was to join thanksgiving with our prayers, referring ourselves wholly unto God, and quietly waiting for such an issue from him as could not yet be seen. Like as then when Isaac continued still so to cast all his heaviness into the bosom of God, and all the care that oppressed him, and all the sorrows, griefs and anguishes, wherein he was enclosed: when he reposed all this in the bosom of God, this was a sure trial of his faith.

This then is what we have to learn by his example: to wit, that we think not that God has bound himself unto us to do all that he has spoken at the first dash: but after that he has once spoken, he will not give any sign to accomplish his work and we will think that all that he had promised was nothing else (as men say,) but words and wind. It behooves then that we be held in, with such patience: (as also the Apostle exhorts us hereto, in the tenth Chapter too the Hebrews) that from day to day, from year to year, and all our life long, and as if nothing were, that we hold ourselves there in quiet and hold our peace before God, to the end we skirmish not, nor make any broil, nor plead against him, nor summon him, according as our fickle appetites would move us. And hereupon we have to put that in practice which the Apostle allegateth out of the Prophet Habakkuk:

That if he fore-slow his promise, we should wait, and it shall not linger.

He there sets down two things: he says indeed that the promise of God shall not be foreslowed: that is to say, that it shall have a certain and undoubted execution, and in its season: But concerning us and our sense or feeling, he says, it shall linger: so that we have need patiently to wait. Behold then how our faith must be tried. For if we hope that God will show himself faithful towards us, and that we remain firm and constant, it behooved that we be often again and again exercised in prayers and supplications: for faith must not be idle, to be short, if we have to live here beneath, as poor miserable wretches, and that some must be afflicted with diseases, and others with poverty, that every one has to endure many afflictions and miseries: that nevertheless we go forward, and that we know, when God promises us to be our father, it is not that he means to show it always apparently to the eye.

He will give us indeed some taste of his goodness, as much as shall be necessary, yea we shall have therein to satisfy ourselves, so that our faith be always joined therunto: in such sort that we shall feel, that that which he has pronounced is not to deceive us. Open thy mouth and I will fill it. But however it be, it behooves that we wait always by faith, for that which yet appears not, and which is as it were far from us, and seems to be impossible. Again, when we shall be thus grounded and stayed upon the truth of God, and that we shall suffer ourselves to be afflicted by many miseries, that yet, we have that care and zeal to pray and call upon God both morning and evening, and have our recourse unto him: for this is our only comfort.

This therefore is not a thing lightly to be passed over, when Moses rehearses, that Isaac prayed unto God for the barrenness of his wife, and that God heard him. For on the one side we see the perseverance which Isaac had in staying himself upon God, and making request unto him: on the other side we see that God was not deaf to his requests: but this was not, for that he showed himself at the first dash. For a man would have said, that Isaac was abused to run so unto God morning and evening, and that it had been better that he had given over all: but at the end of twenty years, God came suddenly, to the end he might show that men are too hasty and headlong in their desires: and here see, what is the cause that often times his name is blasphemed, and men will accuse him for that he works not according to our fantasy: this (say I) proceeds of impatience.

Now we have also to note, that Isaac knew that it was a great benefit of God, to give him issue. For when God had pronounced, Increase and multiply, according as we have seen, it is to show that neither men nor beasts could bring forth and increase, but by his power, that we should not think that it came by adventure. If therefore Bulls, horses, and Asses cannot engender, unless God shed out his blessing and secret power, what shall be of men? For we are far more noble creatures, inasmuch as God has formed us according to his own image. So that when we see that both men and beasts are increased by generation, we must thereby call to memory that this is from the word of God, which has issued out of his mouth, Increase and multiply, which yet even at this day shows itself, but we must go farther: to wit, that God keeps this blessing and liberality to himself, to the end to distribute it as he sees good.

For we see that all engender not alike: Some have no Children, others one or two, and others again have them by dozens. So then when we

see such an inequality, it behooves us to acknowledge that it is a special benefit of God to have children: as also it is expressly said in the Psalm, that the fruit of the womb (for so the Scripture speaks) is a reward of God. And so we must in this behalf, have recourse unto him. And therefore those that desire so greatly to have children, they must follow always the example of Isaac. For they will say indeed, O I would have Children: but of thinking upon God, there is neither mention, nor news. And forasmuch as God is defrauded of his honor, lo, why he withdraws his hand: or rather if he give an offspring, forasmuch as they are a profane people, he will give them children which shall scratch out their eyes. For their children are as young serpents, or thorns, for to prick and pierce them even to the heart.

Behold therefore what is the cause that many have no offspring to succeed them: or if they have, it is for their further evil: forasmuch as they have not addressed themselves to God, to obtain all of his blessing. Let us therefore mark well, that that which is here showed as concerning our father Isaack, is that he seeing his wife barren, prepared himself to God knowing very well, that it was of him that he ought to demand issue. And in deed, what will men allege here against this blessing? If we mark that which is written in Job, that when a child comes into the world, it is as a lively image of the incomprehensible power of God, which cannot be sufficiently esteemed. For whereof is it that an infant is ingendered, and after it is conceived, how comes it in into the womb of the mother? And further, how is it, that he comes forth? If a man mark all these things, who will be so brutish, to say that men engender them by their own strength and industry?

Let us then hold fast this lesson: which is that they that are married and desire offspring, that they ask it of God: and that for two reasons. The first, because God has reserved this in his own hand, as

we have even now alleged out of the Psalm. The second is, that it is not enough that their houses be full of children, unless that God always govern them. For it were much better that they had no offspring at all, then to have a perverse seed, accursed and full of mischief. So then let fathers learn (in this behalf) to follow the example of Isaack. But let us also diligently note, that Isaack prayed not for an offspring, only after the natural appetite of men: But he looked up higher: that is to say, because that it behooved that of him should proceed the salvation of the world in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the which shall be deducted more at large hereafter.

But now let us fall down before the holy majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our faults, and praying him that he will make us too feel them more and more, and that it may be to humble us, and to bring us to true repentance: and that we may be in such sort touched with fear, that we may desire nothing but to be stripped of all our earthly affections and lusts to the end we may be clothed with his righteousness, until that he shall have drawn us to a full and perfect perfection. And that he will not only do this good unto us, etc.

## **The Second Sermon, Genesis 25.**

20 So that Rebecca his wife conceived.

21 And when the Children strove within her, she said, If it be so, to what end is it? & she went to ask counsel of the Lord.

22 To whom the Lord said: There are two peoples in thy womb, and two nations brought forth out of thy womb shall be divided, of whom one shall be mightier than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger.

WE saw yesterday how God proved the faith of Isaack, before he gave him any offspring, to wit, for the space of twenty years. Now to the end we should know that he prayed not to God in vain, seeing that God heard his request, the which tended to this, that God might send the saviour of the world by means of the seed that he had promised him.

Now lo, wherein it was that Isaack might rejoice, and not after the common manner. For his wife had been barren a long time, & he saw that she had conceived, & that God had declared that he had not forgotten his promise, & after he knew that this was granted him, forasmuch as he had his recourse to God.

But see a new temptation, and which is more hard and more grievous to be borne, than if his wife had remained barren. For she conceived two children, the which struggled and strove together in her belly. Now this was a very hideous thing, and as it were against nature. And see wherefore also she said, that it had been better that she had been dead, & this was not of any impatience that she spoke thus, as if she had felt horrible torments & sorrows that had constrained her unto it: but she looked up higher.

For she bore in her womb all the hope that might be had of the salvation of the world. Now in the meantime she sees such a combat, that it seems that GOD overthrows all, and that he would show therein a sign of his wrath. To be short, the thing is detestable of itself, that there should be such a strife and battle in the womb of a woman: & this came not naturally, but God would now do (as we

have seen) to Isaack and to her, that all they that should come of their seed after the flesh, should not therefore be reputed of the number of the faithful: but rather that there should be mortal war among them.

Now therefore when she saw (in place of having the salvation of the world in her womb) such a sign of God his wrath, and as it were a devilish fight of deadly enemies of the Church, she could not know the whole: but she perceived, that if she had conceived to have such a combat, that this was, as if GOD had been against her, and come with a main army, to say: Thou art unto me as a detestable creature, and I have cast thee off and refused thee. In what case then is she, when she imagines all these things?

And so we ought not to think it strange, if in such anguish, she would rather have chosen to die, than to see so monstrous a thing, which was altogether contrary to the order of nature. Notwithstanding it is said, that in this so great heaviness, she left not off, to have recourse unto God. And in very deed she obtained an answer to comfort her: not but that there was also some grief mingled therewith, but yet God did moderate this passion, that was so grievous unto her, and said, that she had two peoples in her womb: as if he should have said, that this was not only for the two children's sakes, which she bore, but that this had a farther respect: that is to say, that they should be divided one from the other.

And however both two were the sons of Abraham, and that it had been said unto Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, yet it must needs be that from Isaack such must descend, as God should cut off from his Church, who should be rejected, and so consequently should be the enemies of the Church of God. Now it is very true that this might have wounded both Isaack

and Rebecca with a deadly sorrow: but yet in the meantime they see that the goodness of God was no whit quenched & that God showed himself faithful in that he had once pronounced. For he had said.

The elder shall serve the younger.

Wherein Rebecca knew, that of her, howsoever it should be, should come that blessed seed, which had been promised. See in brief the whole that is here rehearsed. But all would be dark, if it were not declared particularly. Let us note here then, that they that are called into the Church, do not always remain there, as we have seen a notable example in Ismael: who was the eldest son of Abraham, notwithstanding he was banished from the family, and it was said, that he should not be heir. And this was not of the riches of the world, nor of those possessions, which Abraham had. For he was rich in cattle, in gold and silver: but he had not one foot of land. This heritage therefore, to what had it respect? Even to the spiritual promise: that is to say, that God had chosen the seed of Abraham, which was as much to say, as this shall be a people that shall be dedicated to my service: and those that shall come of them, will I receive and accept for my children, to the end I may gather them into everlasting life. Mark then how Ismael with his birthright is cast from the hope of life: and it remaineth only to Isaack. And even so is it herein, concerning Esau and Jacob: For both these were descended of Abraham, yes they were twins, their mother bore them in one belly: yet that one is received, and the other rejected: one is chosen, and the other refused.

So then we see that they, who for a time have place in the church, & bear the title of the faithful & of the children of God, may well be so accounted before men, but they are not written in the book of life: God knows them not, nor avouches them for his. Hereby we are

admonished, not proudly to vaunt ourselves, nor to be drunken with sottish presumption, when God shall show us this favour, to bring us into his church: but let us walk in purity, & labor to make sure our election, & to have the testimony thereof in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, & not to trust only to the outward title & appearance, which we may pretend before the world: see what we have here to mark. And moreover we are taught a far greater thing: and that is in the first place: that albeit God had established his covenant with Abraham, yet notwithstanding he would declare that this was not all, to have made offer of his grace: but that it behooved that he choose according to his liberty, such as he thought good, & that the rest should remain in their cursed state. And therefore S. Paul alleges this place to apply it to the secret election of God, through which before the foundation of the world, he chose those as seemed good unto him. Now this is a very high and profound matter, but when it shall be farther declared, every one may make his profit of it, so that we be attentive unto it. And for the remnant, let us receive that, which the holy scripture shows unto us, with sobriety, & let us not desire to be wiser, than is lawful for us: but let us rest in that which God shall speak unto us, & moreover let us be humble, not to reply against him, nor to bring forth our fantasies before him, as though we would plead against God: but acknowledging that his judgments are bottomless: let us not search farther therein, than is permitted unto us. Now it behooves that we handle these things in such sort, that that which at the first show seems to be dark, be made more easy to us. We have already seen that God has chosen Abraham's seed. Now if a man would ask, why or by whom he was brought so to do: he shall not find that Abraham was any worthier than others: as we have already largely enough handled this matter. Lo then a privilege which was given to a certain family, not flowing from any merit, neither for that God found anything in their persons, wherefore they ought to be preferred: for they were no better nor more excellent

than others, but it pleased him so. Now, it is very true that this will be hard for us to digest, if we bring in our own judgment as there are a great sort of fantastical heads which cannot abide this doctrine: For it seems good to them to reply against God: But what profit they thereby in the end? We have alleged that herein we must bring with us an humility, for to reverence that which is hidden from us. And indeed S. Paul has well showed us this by his example. For instead of disputing the matter he cries out: ô how wonderful are the judgments of God: Behold S. Paul who was altogether amazed, he found himself astonished, he that had been rapt up above the heavens, he that had seen the secrets of God which was not lawful for man to utter.

Saint Paul then, who was (as a man would say) a companion of Angels, was found in this case to marvel, and to be altogether confounded: and what shall become of these Scullions, who have scarcely licked with the tip of their tongue one word of the law and Gospel, and yet nevertheless would go beyond Saint Paul? And yet men shall find this pride in very many. But for our part, let us return to that which is here showed us. O man who art thou. When therefore we will make comparison betwixt God and us: who is God? within what compass shall we enclose him? Shall it be within the compass of our brain? And we have scarcely half an ounce of wit, and in mean season God, who closes his fist, to hold the whole world as a grain of dust (as Isaiah the prophet says) and is not comprehended neither in heaven nor in earth, who has an infinite power, an infinite justice and wisdom, and who has incomprehensible counsels: and yet for all that we must come to make him subject to our foolish fantasy. And whereunto will this grow?

Moreover who are we? Men, (says Saint Paul.) By which word he means, that we are nothing at all: as if he should say, must it be that thou presume so much, as to dare to inquire of the bottomless

secrets of God, seeing thou art nothing but clay & dung? And again, what is thy understanding? Thou art full of sin and iniquity, thou art a poor blind one: and yet thou wilt that God shall make an account to thee: and wilt thou conclude, that if thou find not that which he does good and reasonable, that thou mayest accuse him, and must he needs hold up his hand at thy bar? Now let us mark this admonition in the first place, and let us know that our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us, that we cannot do amiss to hearken and open our ears, to inquire and search after that, that it has pleased him we should know: but let us take heed that we go not beyond it: For there is no rage so great and outrageous, as when we will know more than God does show us.

And moreover we shall have spun a fair thread if we apply all our senses and all our studies thereto: whether is it that we shall come? This shall be always to enwrap us so much the more in a labyrinth, and maze unless, we have the direction of God to show us the way.

Let us therefore keep this mean: that is to say, to hearken to that which God does propound unto us: and as soon as he shall once shut his mouth, let us have all our understandings locked up & captive, and let us not enterprise to know more, than that he shall have pronounced unto us. Now therefore see how the stock of Abraham was chosen before all the rest of the world, forasmuch as God so would: but this was not yet enough: For it behooves that his free election be yet better confirmed unto us.

And this is it that is here showed unto us, in the person of two brethren. For behold Rebecca which bore Jacob & Esau: was the one better than the other? Saint Paul expounding this place says. And they were not yet born. How then could they have obtained favor and grace before God for their merits? for Jacob had done neither good nor evil no more than Esau. Why then does God make him the

greater? It behooves not that we enter into any deeper disputation of this matter, unless it be to adore with astonishment the secret council of God, through which, those which seemed good to him are elected, and the other rejected.

See then how God would yet give greater glory & beauty to his mercy, when he had chosen Jacob before Esau. For indeed he might have well placed Jacob the foremost, when the Infants should come forth from their mothers' womb. Men may well understand, that this was not by any adventure: as it is said in the Psalm: Thou hast drawn me out from my mother's womb: And God manifests a singular power, when children come into the world. And why then did not he permit & ordain that Jacob should have the privilege of birthright? For this was meet since he meant to banish Esau out of the church, and would have Jacob to remain there, & to succeed in the place of his father Isaac and Abraham.

And why does God then pull him back, & make him inferior to his brother, as touching the law of nature, and afterwards sets him above him? In this we see that God would shut out all glory of man, that he would that all height should be thrown down, and that men should bring nothing of their own: to the end to say: I have attained such or such a good thing. I have gotten it by mine own industry.

We see then that which I have already touched: that is to say, that we have here a glass, wherein we may behold, that all they that are of the church, are not advanced thereto by their own virtue, and that they have not obtained this favor by their merits: but that God has chosen them before they were born.

See then briefly what we have to hold out of this place. But now a man might here move some doubt: For Moses says expressly that this was extended to two peoples, and that it was not only in respect

of Jacob and Esau, that this struggling combat was moved, as touching their persons: but that it was in respect of their successors, & each other's posterity. Now it is so, that many which descended of Jacob were nevertheless rejected. For he stays upon that that is spoken here: to wit, that the stock & offspring of Jacob was chosen and that of Esau rejected: and yet notwithstanding a man may see, that the most part of those that descended of Jacob, were disallowed of God, & that he pronounces them bastard children, the children of an harlot, & such as were sprung of fornication, & that they belonged nothing at all unto him, & that it was a vain thing for them, to glory or boast of his name. Now how can these agree together?

Let us mark that God sets such a spectacle before the eyes of Jacob & Rebecca, to show them what the condition & state of the church should be: For God in few words testifies unto them, that his church should come of Jacob: and not that all they which he should beget concerning the flesh must be of the church: but it was enough that he remained there, & that God kept him: & that Esau was driven out in time, as afterwards we shall see. This shall be better understood by that exposition which Saint Paul gives: he takes this sentence thus: All they which are of Jacob after the flesh, are not for all that, true Israelites: that is to say, they are not of the people of God. For he had two names, as we shall see hereafter, to wit, Jacob & Israel. And that it is so, before the children were born, lo God, which severs the one from the other, and shows that this is not one body, and that they were not united together: but that one was reserved, & the other rejected. Saint Paul therefore well understood, that they which should be born of Jacob, were not all elected of God: for he sends us to the beginning, and says that the one was separated from the other by the secret counsel of God, & that we cannot comprehend & set forth the reason thereof: forasmuch (as I have already said) that he

keeps his liberty, in such sort that it well suffices that the Church be engendered of his stock, albeit that all do not appertain unto it.

We have before declared that there was a double grace or favor in this stock of Abraham: one was, that God had in general declared, that he would be their father. Circumcision also was common to them all. Now circumcision was not in vain: but it bore witness of the remission of sins and of the righteousness that all the faithful must obtain through our Lord Jesus Christ. Lo then Ishmael who was circumcised: as much as was on God's behalf, he received the sacrament that might assure him that God accounted him of the number of his children, that he was a member of Jesus Christ, that the curse which he had drawn from Adam, was abolished: yea but this stood him in no stead at all. As much may be said of Esau, & of all their like: but however it was, we must not despise the benefit that he showed toward all the stock of Abraham. As at this day when we speak of the inestimable blessing that God has bestowed upon us, when his Gospel was preached: this same shall be spoken unto all indifferently. Men will say that God has used a very singular mercy towards us, inasmuch as he has lightened us by his word, that we should know the way of salvation. In the meantime, we see others that wander in darkness and confusion, as if God had forgotten and altogether cast them off. Behold the Papists, albeit they are full of pride and rebellion, yet they are tossed to and fro of Satan: so as they know neither way nor path: & in mean time God calls us to him daily, & there is mention of his covenant, to the end that we should know that he is always merciful unto us, and that we may call upon him in a true certainty, not doubting, but that he will be our father. Behold then a benefit, which we ought not to esteem lightly of: and yet there are a great many, to whom this serves not, but to condemnation: For there is so much the more unthankfulness, if they be rebels against God, and disdain to accept the fatherly favor that he offered unto

them. So then, behold such a favor already bestowed upon us, as that was upon the stock of Abraham: but yet there was also a second grace, the which must yet be restrained to these bounds: to wit, that God has chosen of this stock, those that has seemed good unto him, as he received Isaac to himself, and Ishmael had no place in his house: he might well be accounted for a time a member of his house: but in the end he was cut off. As much may be said of the children of Keturah: and behold although Esau were the first born, yet God shut him out.

See therefore a second favor which was in Abraham's family: that is, that God held to himself those that he thought good. For Jacob was as the root of this stock which sprung afterwards. And farther mark for what cause all the elect were figured in his person, and that God sets forth unto us, that they have not that of themselves, which he through his only goodness gives unto them, and that they cannot brag, that this was of their own moving, that they attained to salvation: but that they were drawn to it, yea inasmuch as they were chosen before the creation of the world and consequently before their birth.

Behold, wherefore S. Paul, in this place that we have alleged, for the more full declaration adjoins the testimony of Moses: "I will have mercy on him on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on him, on whom I will have compassion." It should seem that this is a broken speech and from the purpose: but it is of great importance: For it is as much as if GOD had said, I know whom I will reserve, and there is no need that any come in this case to plead with me: For this consists in my liberty. When we shall mark our common speech, this shall not be dark at all. For if a man say, "I will do that, I will do": that is to say, I will do that which I think good to do, by this he shows, that he will not submit himself to any person:

he shows that he is neither tied nor bound to open his counsel & purpose, in that he has to do. So God says, I will show mercy to him, that I will show mercy: as if he should say: My mercy depends neither upon this or that, neither must the cause be sought in any other, nor I bound to any law: For I know what I ought to do: & in the meantime my mercy shall have place, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy: That is to say: I mark not who is worthy of it. For there is not one: But yet I will not cease to show mercy to some, to wit, to such as I shall have chosen.

Mark then how precisely God speaks: and this is to beat down whatever men can allege to shut the door against all curiosity, and set a bar against all presumption: & that we do simply reverence him, leaving that to him which he has reserved to himself: that is to say, when he saves, it is of his free goodness: and when he condemns, that we should not enterprise to bark against God, but that we shut up our mouth: unless it be to glorify him.

Now let us mark that this was spoken by Moses when the people already multiplied, & after that God had brought them out of Egypt. Behold a Church descended from the race of Jacob? For from this same barren house, and which was as it were desolate, GOD had drawn so great a multitude therefrom, that this seemed rather to be a notorious miracle, & that this promise was verified: that Abraham's seed should be as the stars of Heaven. Was not this in a goodly show in respect of men? God says of this multitude here, I will retain as many as I shall think good: I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and let no man ask the reason thereof. It is true indeed that God has reason, but it follows not therefore that we can comprehend it, or that we must break out beyond our bounds into his secrets. We must therefore know that in respect of us, there is no reason: but the

counsel of God ought to be unto us in all respects the rule of righteousness, wisdom and equity.

Mark therefore how the exposition of S. Paul agrees very well to that which is here pronounced: that is to wit, that there were two peoples in the belly of Rebecca, and that from her bowels two nations should be divided: and this was as much as if God had testified, that there should be such a divorce, that yet the stock of Jacob should remain blessed: Not altogether without exception, but those whom it should please GOD to keep to himself, as he had chosen them before the creation of the world. See then the sum of that which is contained here.

But before we go any farther, let us well note that which has been said: that is to say, that the principal thing which we have to observe, is this, that God will have the whole praise of our salvation to be attributed to him. For what is the root and beginning of the church? It is his election. See whereunto Moses calleth us, yea according to the interpretation of S. Paul: and the text also herein is most plain. For here (as I have said) there is not any question of any earthly or transitory inheritance: it is of everlasting life that Abraham had hoped for according to that he had received through the promise. Now see Jacob an heir: and why so? was it because he put himself in the favour of God, or for that he had purchased favour for anything he brought? It was not so. See then Moses' text without any gloss, which shows sufficiently, that the Church springeth from the pure grace of God: & so that all the praise of our salvation, must wholly be reserved to himself.

Now, for all this, they that would overthrow and darken this doctrine say, although that God knew no merit in Jacob: yet he foresaw well enough that he should be such a one. Behold for what cause they say

he was chosen, and Esau rejected. To be short, inasmuch as a great sort of those Dogs dare not openly and flatly deny the election of God, they would that there should be a superior cause, to wit, his foreknowledge. And what is that foreknowledge? It is that God foresees what manner of one every one must be: and he chooses (say they) those whom he has foreseen to be of a good nature and affection: and it is no marvel if he accept them before others: For he knows the good which appears not yet, but is to come.

But such kind of men have no drop of the fear of God. For they manifestly blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, who has spoken by the mouth of S. Paul, and these mock at that which S. Paul has spoken as if it were a fable. For if a man accept their solution, then has S. Paul spoken as an ignorant & unadvised man: For he takes this reason, he found neither good nor evil, neither in Isaac nor in Esau, nor in Jacob. Notwithstanding God chose the one and rejected the other. But the reply shall be easy, in the opinion of these fantastical persons. And how? It is true that there was neither good nor evil: but there must be either good or evil, and God did so foresee it.

But S. Paul presupposes that this be true, to wit, that we are all damned, and that until that God had chosen us, it must needs be that we should remain as serpents full of venom, and that there was nothing in us but matter of wrath & of the vengeance of God, and that we are altogether confounded, and full of poison and iniquity.

Lo Jacob's case as well as Esau's. For what shall we find in the race of Adam, but all corruption? We are therefore infected before God: and inasmuch as the root is accursed and vicious and altogether rotten, it must needs be that the fruits be of the same sort. So then when God shall leave us such as we are, it must needs be that we all perish, and that there remain not one, but that we be all lost and consumed.

To be short, this doctrine is common enough in the holy Scripture, that we are all the children of wrath. It followeth then that there was no diversity in Esau and Jacob, and that God had not distinguished the one from the other, for that he found or foresaw any good either in the one or other. For what could he foresee, but this corrupted mass of Adam, that brings forth no other fruit but malediction? See therefore what he foresaw as well in the one as in the other indifferently. It followeth then, that he had put in Jacob that which is found in him, and that he left Esau such a one as his birth brought him forth.

See also why it is said in another place, "That God hath chosen us, to the end that we should be holy & unblamable before him." He saith not, because God foresaw that we should be holy, he hath chosen us: but contrariwise he deriveth all our holiness and righteousness, and all the good which shall be found in us, he deriveth it from this root: to wit, from the election of God, to the end we should walk in his fear, that we should have some integrity in us, that we should have some zeal and affection to do well. If this be so, it followeth then that God hath foreseen nothing in us. For let us take away election, and what shall there remain? As we have declared, we remain altogether lost and accursed. And not without cause: For God saw nothing in us but corruption: and it must needs be that he must disallow us, & renounce us, as it is said, that he repented that he had made man.

Behold then what we may allege on our part. So then, this is too trifling a folly to say, that God hath chosen his, according as he foresaw they should become afterwards: for it must needs be, that he put in them, that which is good, and place it there, because he hath chosen them. Mark therefore the first step whereby we must begin: that is to say, that we nothing differ one from another, unless in this, that God hath discerned us.

Mark also for what cause S. Paul disannuls all the glory which men may usurp: "Who is it (saith he) that doth discern thee?" he hath nothing but this word there to beat down & disannul all pride. And why so? For hast thou anything (saith he) which is thine own? Hereby he showeth that men cannot choose their own place, to say, I will dispose myself to do good, & God shall have pity upon me, and I will come unto his grace, I will have a good motion, I will have this preparation. Now S. Paul excludes all this, in saying that we are all lost, that one with another, we must all be thrown down, and enter into the gulf of hell, except it please God to discern us.

Lo from whence all our dignity and excellence comes: that is, for that it pleases God to lend us his hand. Again let us hold fast this principle, and apply all this doctrine which we have rehearsed to this purpose, how God hath set forth unto us, in Jacob & Esau, a glass to look into. Likewise let us content ourselves, that these two persons may be unto us, as two lively images, to show us that the world in itself, is of like condition: but that one sort is called and not the other because it has so pleased God. And specially (as I have noted) Jacob was the younger, & it seemed rather that he should be subject to his brother, according to the order of nature: notwithstanding mark that he was placed in the degree of the firstborn and Esau not only was put under him, but he was utterly rejected: For in the end he had no part nor portion in the church. This thing shows very well unto us, that God would hold us always convicted, that there is no question of bringing anything before God on our part, to thrust in ourselves there, as if we had any value and worthiness in us: For God is not contrary to himself: nevertheless he would show here a certain kind of repugnance and contrariety. It is he who ordained that the firstborn of the house should be the head. Now he set down this law: and yet in the meantime he overthrows it: but (as I have said) all this agrees very well: For God is above his ordinary law, & yet he would

change that which was accustomed by a common rule: & he does it to the end that we should know that it is (as S. Paul also has said) neither of the willer, nor of the runner: but only of him which showeth mercy. Now when S. Paul says, that it is neither of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth: he means not that we may have some good will of ourselves: as he has declared in another place: "For it is God which giveth it:" and also he means not that we can enforce ourselves but he shows that men have nothing; and therefore they can bring nothing to God.

There is nothing then but his mercy alone. For if men had anything to set against it, there must be a parting of stakes, and that must be known which is from God, and that which is from men. And then it might be said that we have not all from the only mercy of God: but that therein there is our good will, our good running, and our good zeal. Men might so speak: But Saint Paul would here make frustrate, whatsoever men might bring of themselves, and show that nothing hath dominion herein, but the only mercy of GOD. It is very true that many people will enforce themselves, yea and they allege the example of the Jews, who were swollen as Toads with a devilish kind of pride, thinking that God was bound as it were to them, and who would be accounted righteous according to their works: but herein they deceive themselves, and shall do nothing but go back instead of going forward. When men presume so of themselves, it is certain that they rob God of his honor. See then these sacrilegious persons and worse than thieves, and moreover until God shall have renewed us, whatsoever goodly show we have, it is certain that there is nothing in us but stench, and we shall be as vile vermin before GOD.

So then let us not pretend that we can either will or run: but it behooves that God find us as lost, and that he recover us from that bottomless pit, and that he separate us from them with whom we

were lost, and to whom we were alike. For (as I have said) the condition of mankind is all one. It is true, that the one sort are the Children of wrath, and the other God blesses. But from whence comes this separation, and this divorce? From mercy. And we must not go to inquire any farther, but we must content ourselves with this word alone, instead of all reason.

Mark then for what cause, namely the first-born was cast out from his place: and in the meantime Jacob who was the inferior, was set in his place, yea, to remain the only heir. When Malachi the Prophet speaks of this, he reproaches unto the Jews their ingratitude. It is true that this was for an outward sign, that GOD had chosen Jacob rather than Esau, for as much as he had given the land of Canaan to be his inheritance, and that Esau was sent far off amidst the Mountains: but this is not the sentence whereupon the Prophet rests: he looks unto a thing much higher.

Saint Paul also when he uses this testimony of his, seeing that GOD had taken unto himself the stock of Jacob, he attributes all this to his mere mercy: But the Prophet says. "And Esau, was he not the brother of Jacob?" As if he should say, "You are full of pride and obstinacy, yea, you burst yourselves therein, and it costs you nothing to say, 'O we are of the holy & sacred stock of Abraham: we are the Church, we are the people whom God has blessed and sanctified: yea, & from whence have you this (says he?) For was not Esau, Jacob's brother?"

You see the Edomites, your brethren: and are they the people of God? you say that they are strangers from the Church: and although they have circumcision, yet notwithstanding God has cut them off. And whence comes this (says he?) Who is it that has so separated them? If you will go from age to age: very well, you shall find how you are the Children of Jacob. And Esau, whose child was he I pray

you? Did he not descend from Abraham and Isaac as well as you? But here he speaks not only of the land of Canaan: but he goes farther, and says That he loved Jacob, & hated Esau. And this love which he bore unto Jacob, from whence proceeded it? It is certain that Jacob could not be accepted of him (as we have said) being considered in himself. For behold him the child of wrath, & bringing nothing from the womb of his mother, but this horrible curse, which was cast upon all mankind: notwithstanding God did love him. Now God loves not iniquity, he hates sin as we know. How then loved he Jacob? This was for that he drew him from that perdition, wherein he was. And why did he hate Esau? Now it is very true that there is just cause why God should hate all mankind: For as we have said, there is nothing in us but vice and iniquity: but yet when we will go farther, and that we will demand, why God before he created the world, and before the fall of Adam, why this should be, that he would hate or love? here we must hold ourselves mute and still: Here we must not lift up our horns. For what shall we gain, when we will enter into debate and question with God? It is certain that we shall cast stones upon our own heads, and they will fall neither here nor there, they cannot reach unto the majesty of God: but they shall return upon our own pates, and it must be that we be crushed and bruised therewith.

Behold then what we shall gain when we open our throat, to cast forth blasphemies against God: For we shall but cast out our darts & stones into the air: but they shall not reach unto him, it shall be rather that we be pierced and wounded by them, and that we remain confounded in that our rashness and overweening. Thus, let us content ourselves with that which God has pronounced, that is to say: that he has hated Esau and loved Jacob. Now by this the Children of Jacob were as well convinced, that they had nothing whereof they might glory in themselves, and that there rested nothing, but that they made an acknowledgment unto God of such a

liberal and bountiful goodness which he had used towards them, and whereof none could find any reason, unless in this that it so pleased him. But notwithstanding they were full of impiety against God, and would hold this privilege: but God shows them, that it does not belong unto them, and that if they accounted him for their father, they must be his children. But hereby we are admonished, that although our salvation proceeds from the only grace of God, and that therein it consists to the end: Nevertheless it follows not, that under the shadow hereof, we can let loose ourselves to evil, and give ourselves thereto. But there are villains & dogs that bark against God, & there are also Hogs, which overthrow this doctrine of election, by their loose and lewd life. For there are two sorts of people, that are enemies to this doctrine. The one are as dogs, & the other as Hogs. The one, which are they? they which will and come to show their teeth, and who despise God by their wicked questions: as we see at this day in those villains who make no scruple, to rend in pieces all the holy Scripture to corrupt, pervert, falsify & adulterate all, so that they may darken the election of God, to wit, to make nothing of all. And mark whereunto this tends, to make this doctrine odious. For they will say, that they that thus speak, they put no more any difference between good and evil, & that God by this mean should become unrighteous, if he should put any difference between one and another, & that there should be acceptance of persons in him. Behold then the dogs that bark and whet their teeth against this doctrine. Now there are also Hogs which will not despise in such sort against it, but will say, very well. If I be elected I may do as much evil as I will: For God knows well how to keep me, and I can never perish: and contrariwise if I be reprobate, why should I torment myself so much to do well, seeing that I can never be saved. These then (as I have already said) come not to spew up their contradictions, to overthrow the truth of God: but they wallow there, and remain in their sins as brute beasts. But we must take heed both of the one and

the other And for this cause (as I have said) the Prophet Malachi showing to the people, that all that he had done unto them, came of the mere & free bounty of God, exhorts them to holiness of life. And therefore as it is said unto us, that God is the author of our salvation, and that we can bring nothing to serve in that matter, and that yet we must always be kept under his guard, and that he must perfect & accomplish that which he has begun, let not this be to the end, to let loose the bridle to our vices: but rather to keep us in his fear.

And in very deed when Saint Paul says that these are the hidden letters, and that it is an incomprehensible secret, to know who are the children of God, he adds: "Whosoever calleth upon the name of God, let him depart from all iniquity." Let us mark then, that GOD would give us no occasion to do evil when he chose us without any regard to our merits, and that he also maintains us by his mere goodness: but this is to the end that we should honor him, and we should walk in so much the greater carefulness. And therefore let us return to that we have touched: to wit, that he has chosen us, to the end that we should be holy and without blame before his face. It is true that he has not chosen us because he found us such: but when he chose us, it was to the end we should be such. It behooves therefore that we march thither, and that this be the mark that we aim at all the days of our life.

But now let us fall down before the majesty of our good GOD, in acknowledging of our faults, praying him that he will in such sort make us feel them, that it may be to humble us, and to draw us to true repentance, to the end, we may renounce all our fleshly lusts and affections: and that being so cast down in ourselves, we may be enlightened by the power of his holy spirit, to the end to serve and honor him all the time of our life: and that by this means we may so much the more be stirred up to give ourselves wholly to him,

knowing that we hold all of his mere goodness: and that this may be to glorify his holy name, not only in mouth but in our whole life. That not only, &c.

## **The third Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 25.**

21 Now when Rebecca had conceived, the children strove within her belly. And she said, "If it be so, to what end is it, or why do I live?" And she went to ask counsel of the Lord.

22 And the Lord said unto her, "There are two peoples in thy womb, and two nations brought forth out of thy womb shall be divided, of whom one shall be mightier than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."

It is a thing that much troubles men's spirits when they see the state of the world so confused, that the majority manifestly despise God, and it seems that they have conspired with the devil to give themselves over to all mischief. For this is thought to be greatly against reason, that God should create men to destroy them. Wherefore then is it that He allows the majority to fall? If it is said that this ought to be imputed not to God but to those who of their own accord throw themselves to perdition, yet this does not alleviate the troubles we conceive. Could not God remedy it? Why then does He not do it? Those who allege a simple permission, that God lays the bridle upon every man's neck, and that everyone guides himself according to his own free will, yet they cannot well undo this knot: to

wit, why God has not created men of another sort, and why He has allowed them to be so weak, yea, and inclined to evil and corruption; and seeing that He knew their infirmity, why does He not help them and provide some remedy? This therefore entangles us in great torments and troubles.

But it behooves us to go yet farther: For it is certain (as the Scripture declares) that there is nothing that does not perish, except that which God preserves through His mere goodness and free bounty. But now, how comes it to pass that God chooses only the tenth or the hundredth part of men and leaves all the rest, knowing well that they are swallowed up in hell and lost? Why does He not reach out His hand to help them, yea, why has He ordained them to destruction, as the Scripture speaks? For mark the very words of Solomon: "Behold a sentence which drives us from such hard questions: and many are therein entangled, as it were among thorns: And further they thrust in themselves so far that they are altogether confounded."

But yet there is a temptation far greater. For besides that general state of the world, the like is seen also in the Church: that is, when the Gospel has been preached to a whole people, there are then many hypocrites; the others are rebels, others become wholly brutish, in such a sort that they profit but very little in this school, although God notes all without exception to whom He speaks. And beyond all these, a man shall find many who, through contempt and ingratitude, will shut against themselves the gate of salvation and will reject all the graces of God; and not only this: but men shall find deadly enemies of the doctrine, although they are of the household. And in very deed the prophet Isaiah, having said that God would gather His church out of the world, and that He would have so great a people as should be wonderful, instead of rejoicing, he afterwards adds: "Alas, my bowels." Now by this, he shows that when it shall

seem that all must flourish and prosper, and that God must be glorified both of great and small, and that His banner must be displayed to gather together the whole world, to the end that with one accord all may serve God, then he uncovers a secret mischief. For the Prophet cries not only alas the hands, alas the legs: but he cries out, alas my bowels, as though he would say, this mischief is so rooted in the church that it must be as it were mingled of so sundry sorts of men, that she must nourish in her own belly her own enemies, as we have seen by the figure in Rebecca. Now what is to be done therein? Everyone sees that if we enter into such fantasies, we cannot have any resolution, and the devil will thrust in himself amongst us, to the end to make us blaspheme against God, or else to put such bitterness into our heart that we shall seem rather to be blocks of wood than reasonable creatures formed according to God's image, as we do see the experience thereof in many people who do become as it were mad and raging against God because they cannot rid themselves from difficulties and doubts.

It is necessary, therefore, to search out a remedy. Now it is true that we cannot fully exempt ourselves from all passions, that at the first blush and as it were with some puff we be not moved and troubled, and that our thoughts do not wander, that we do not conceive many things at random, and that we have not many disputes, both on the one side and on the other: to be short, that we be not tossed, as if there were some kind of tempest and whirlwind which carried us about. We cannot have our spirits altogether quiet, nor so well guided that they shall have no troubles. And this is declared unto us in Rebecca, when she says:

"If it be so, to what end I? or why do I live?"

She desires death, and yet she is the mother of the faithful? She represents the Church. Now if this were in her, who bore in her belly the hope of the salvation of the world: what shall be in us? So, considering that we have our minds so ready to conceive follies and vanities, and moreover so ready also to cast us off the hinges, and in the end so subject to make us storm against God, so much the rather it stands us in hand to search out the remedy. Now that is given us here in Rebecca: For she does not lose herself in her sadness, she bites not upon the bridle, as many do who stick there, who seek to have no mean wherein to content themselves, nor to make them quiet and settled: but they wander this way and that way, and always add fantasies to fantasies, and plunge themselves so deep in their imaginations that the Devil afterwards possesses them and drives them by all violence and fury against God. Rebecca does not so: But when she felt that this was an intolerable grief unto her, she withdraws herself unto God, she inquires of him, and an answer was given unto her by and by. She had therefore whereupon to rest herself when she knew that so was the good pleasure of God: and when she saw what he demanded: and that one of her own children should be cut off from the Church, and the other reserved, she knowing this, it behooves that she rest there and submit herself thereto: which thing she does. For she strives not against God. Likewise, we read not that at any time after she murmured: but we see that she hearkened unto God: and brought forth children afterwards, and always she rested herself in that which had been said unto her, and set her mind and affection upon Jacob. And why so? Because she knew that he was ordained of God to be the blessed seed, which she had hoped for: so as she behaved herself more manfully in this respect than Isaac her husband. Now this is to show us that when we are in any trouble, we must straightway have our recourse to God. For our spirits are not able enough to know these hidden things: yea we see that in the most easiest things in the world

(as seems unto us) we shall be many times ravished and astonished. And what shall it be then, when the question shall be of the judgments of God, which are incomprehensible, and which are of so high and profound a matter, that the Holy Ghost teaches us, instead of curious searching after them, that we must adore them? Shall men presume of their reason, and of that they shall build upon their good liking, and shall they examine all after their own fantasy and opinion? It is certain that such presumption shall not remain unpunished: and it is seen also. For wherefore is it that so many dogs at this day spew out their blasphemies against this doctrine of predestination? It is because they vouchsafe not to inquire at the mouth of God, but they will give sentence as their brain will bear, forsooth as though we were fit and sufficient. So then let us follow the example of Rebecca: that is to say, when all these questions shall come before our eyes, and that we shall be tormented on every side, in thinking: And how is it possible that the most part of the world shall perish, and the rest be saved? How comes it to pass that one is elected and another rejected? How is it that the greatest number go to destruction, and that there is but a handful of people which God reserves to himself?

When we shall be thus tormented, let us have recourse unto God: that is to say, let us hearken to that which is showed us in the holy Scripture, let us pray God that he will open our ears and our eyes, to the end we may understand his will. And farther have we this? It behooves us altogether to rest therein, and to be quiet. For there is no cause of disputing any farther, when God has once pronounced his sentence. To be short, this is daily to show us that we cannot ever dispose ourselves to receive the instruction of the holy Scripture, and to seek all our wisdom there, unless we have this modesty and humility in us, not to desire to understand or know anything but that which is contained therein. We need not any revelation from heaven

at this day, as Rebecca had. It is very true that some conjectured that she went unto some Prophet: but they were thin sown in the world then. For a man may easily perceive that Melchizedek was dead: and that there was not any more than Abraham and Isaac.

This then is a dream, to think that she went to the schools of the Prophets: but she had a revelation, as our text here shows. And our condition at this day is not altogether like, and neither have we also such need thereof. For then there was neither the Law nor the Gospel. At this day we have all perfection of doctrine: For God in old time has spoken unto our Fathers, and not in secret, nor in obscurity (as says Isaiah the Prophet.)

And this was not in vain that he said, that men should seek him: as Moses protests: "Behold the way, walk in the same: I have set before you this day, the way of salvation, and Heaven and Earth are witnesses unto me, that I have declared unto you what you must do, to come unto everlasting life." And afterwards although God has his secrets (says he in another place) yet notwithstanding this, that is to say the sum of the law, is for you and for your children: to the end that you should be taught in the way of salvation. But besides this we have yet the Gospel, wherein our Lord Jesus Christ has shined unto us in all fullness: For he is that son of righteousness. Seeing therefore we have so sufficient testimonies, shall we demand that Angels come down from Heaven, and that God will yet open unto us that is hidden from us? But let us (as I have already said) content ourselves with the holy Scripture. And when there is any cause of inquiring after God, if we will have him for our master, let us come to the holy Scripture: & let us remember that which Moses says: "Thou shalt not say, Who is he that shall ascend above the Clouds? Who is he that shall descend into the depth? Who is he that shall go over the sea? The word of the Lord is in thy heart, and in thy mouth," says he. And seeing it is so

that Moses has protested this in his time: at this day we have less occasion to wander here and there, and to run at all adventure to inquire after the will of God. For (as I have already said) the Gospel contains all perfection of doctrine: and also behold the only means, whereby we may be thoroughly satisfied, and have our minds settled and stayed: that is to say, that we hearken to God speaking, and show ourselves teachable, to receive that which he shall say. For it is certain that as he has answered to our mother Rebecca, that which he knew to be expedient: So the Scripture likewise will not deceive in this point: for it pronounces clearly and manifestly, that God has chosen us in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world, according to his good pleasure, which he has purposed in himself. There needs no gloss: behold God speaks after this sort, that the most rude and ignorant may know, what there is contained therein. God then has chosen us (says St. Paul) and hereby he shows that he has discerned us from those which perish. And mark how his mercy towards us has the greater glory. For what let that we should not remain in the same perdition that others did, but that God was merciful unto us, without any defer of ours?

But the better to express all, Saint Paul says that he did choose us in Jesus Christ: it follows then that this is out of our persons. If we had been chosen in ourselves, God should have found some matter in us to have been induced to love us, and to have been inclined to have called us to salvation.

But what? We are chosen without ourselves: that is to say: God had no regard to what we were or might be, but our election is founded in Jesus Christ. And moreover, he yet gives a more ample declaration: that is, according to his good purpose, which he had determined in himself: it is certain that all that is according to the purpose of man, is manifestly excluded: and again when he says in himself: this is to

admonish us, that if we would know the cause why: it is as if we would make an Anatomy of God, and go even into his heart & sound all his secrets. And can we do thus? What overweening is this?

So then, when we shall suffer ourselves to be taught of God, it is certain, that he will answer us, in such sort, as shall be necessary for us, concerning that which belongs to our salvation: and namely we shall know that which surmounts all man's understanding, how the one sort are elected, and the other rejected, and why the one have no doctrine, as the Papists and other infidels, whom God leaves as poor blind ones, & why the other are enlightened through the Gospel.

And farther, concerning those to whom the Gospel is preached, the one receive it with obedience, & they are touched therewith to the quick, and persevere in it to the end: & the other remain blockish, or rather will be full of outrage, to strive against God: or else will be fickle and give themselves over to all iniquity, throwing off the yoke, when they shall be brought into the good way. And from whence comes this diversity?

We must come to this fountain that the holy scripture shows us: that is, that the like grace has not been shown to all. So then, behold our true wisdom that is, that we be God's good scholars: & we shall then be his scholars, when we seek to know nothing, but that he knows to be good & expedient for our salvation: and when we shall rest there, & learn to bring into captivity all our senses, & to keep a hard hand upon them.

Then (say I) if we shall speak of the secret election of God, how he has predestinated these whom he would to salvation, and how he has cast off others: we shall never be troubled. And why so? because we having inquired of God's will, we will conclude, that we must keep ourselves to that which shows us, & to that which the scripture

imports, where he has given us sufficient testimony of that which he knows to be good for us. Finally, there are so many testimonies of Scripture, to certify us of this doctrine that it must needs be, that all they that cannot rest there, must be as it were poisoned of Satan, & that they have conceived the spirit of venom, of pride and rebellion, to the end not to be ordered under the will of God: & that, to be short, they would despise all doctrine and instruction, and close up their eyes against the full light, & have their ears stopped, albeit God has spoken loud and clearly, and that they have occasion to content themselves so much the more.

To heap up all the testimonies, is not needful: but this is sufficient that we have had a sum, yea most evident as I have already briefly showed. Again, we have also, whereof to bless God & to comfort ourselves in him, when we know rightly to apply this doctrine as it behooves. For instead of these fantastical & lightbrains, who would seem to be so subtle & sharp in fighting against God, & against his truth, instead of them searching how they may gainsay him, we must mark how God does satisfy us, and to what end he directs this doctrine & to what purpose he would have it serve us, that is to know that we are elected, and not all.

For in the first place, when we see that we cannot receive the Gospel, unless it be by the special gift of God, this serves to make us so much the more to magnify his goodness towards us, and to see his just judgment against the reprobate, when he deprives them of this doctrine: as we see in the Papacy, that men are as brute beasts, who err & wander through deserts, without keeping way or path.

Now concerning us, we have a sure testimony, which ought so much the more to stir us up to esteem this singular grace towards us. And also when we see some that have deaf ears, although it be daily

declared unto them familiarly, and that which is requisite for their salvation be (as I may say) chewed unto them, they continue always in their estate: or rather they are not a whit touched, & they pass not to give over themselves to all licentiousness of life, as it were in despite of God.

When we see this, it is certain that our Lord has so much the more bound us unto him, for that it has pleased him to make us feel his goodness, and that we have taken such a taste of the hope of salvation which he has propounded unto us: that we have renounced the world and whatever weakness there be in us, however we are full of vices and corruption, nevertheless we hate the evil that is in us, & we delight in that which is good.

When then we have this: it is certain that if we be not harder than iron and steel, we ought to have all rebellion shattered and broken: and that we be inflamed with the love of God, & have our mouth open to bless and praise that so excellent & magnificent grace, which he has showed towards us.

See then the mark that the scripture sets before us. Now in the meantime, these varlets will not stick to say. O shall God be an acceptor of persons? Forsooth as if God regarded in his election rich or poor, as if he regarded a noble man, more than a poor man, or a wise man more than an idiot.

For mark what it is to accept persons. This word Person in the holy scripture imports Look or countenance, as also the Scripture uses it. But God chooses us not for our fair eyes. Who is it that discerned thee? we alleged yesterday that of S. Paul: When God therefore chooses these whom it pleased him, it is in his everlasting council, and in himself: that is to say, he has his secrets which we ought to reverence, without further inquiry why seeing this is so, it is certain

that we cannot say, that he accepts persons. And they which so speak are dolts, besides the malice that is in them.

Now then they will say, And how is it that the one shall be saved by faith and not the other, if all depend upon the election of God? But yet herein they show too gross beastliness: For from whence proceeds faith itself, but from the election of God?

They say, ô the promises of God are general, and God calls all the world to salvation: It follows therefore that all the world shall be saved. Yea he would that all the world should be saved: but this is to make the reprobate inexcusable.

For the promises of God undoubtedly contain our salvation: and we shall not be deceived leaning upon them. But what? We must know from whence the faith is which we have. For when the gospel is preached, why is it that one sort profit therein, & receive it with due reverence, & humility of heart, & the other do not, but rather become worse by it? This is, for as much as they which were ordained to salvation (saith S. Luke speaking of the preaching of S. Paul) they (saith he) did believe. Mark S. Paul who preached: it is certain that if ever there were dexterity in a faithful teacher, it was S. Paul that had it: and yet, all were not good scholars: there was but one part that received his doctrine. Whence came this? was it of their industry? was it because they were evil disposed? It is very true that God disposes: But that this comes not from them, S. Luke shows & prevents here all men's dotages, and says that they which were ordained to salvation believed. And mark also wherefore our Lord Jesus Christ says: That those that his heavenly father had given him, should not perish, but that he would keep them to the end.

Now when he says, they which are given me of my father: he calls us to that eternal election. He says also in another place: Thine they

were, & thou gave them unto me. And wherefore is it that the one belong unto God & not the other? This is not in respect that they are mortal men: For our nature is alike: we are all created by one father: but the one belongs unto God, and the other are cast off from him, because it so pleased him. He acknowledges and accepts the one for his own: & the other although they be his creatures, nevertheless they have no acquaintance with him: he accepts them not of his household, inasmuch as he has shut them out from his election. We see then here, how faith is a special gift of God, which proceeds not from our free will, not that we can of ourselves go forward, and that some are more able to comprehend than others: but for that it has pleased God to reveal his secrets to those whom he has elected. And therefore see also why it is said in Isaiah: Who is he that will believe our hearing? For Isaiah had preached of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ: as if he had displayed the banner, to declare that every one should come to be reconciled to God, & that poor sinners should be received to mercy, that their satisfaction & righteousness is altogether ready, & that God desires nothing but to be merciful to those that seek him: has Isaiah preached so? but he cries out forthwith Who will believe our hearing? And why so? For he saw in spirit the presumption & rebellion of unbelievers, because they cannot yield themselves to be ordered by God: but are wild & have always their mouth open to reply against God: & forthwith they have a wandering fantasy they may not obey. He shows that his doctrine shall not be received of the greatest number: and adds the reason: that the arm of God, that is to say, his strength & power is not revealed to all: he shows there that it is not in ourselves that we have either moving, or entrance, nor preparation nor any thing whatsoever it be: but that it must be God that must work therein.

Now if it be so in general: it must follow then that faith comes from this root of the election of God. Now touching the rest when we shall

have known this, there is no question, that we should bury all that instruction which our Lord has given us in the holy Scripture. For after that he has declared to us his will, he exhorts us, he reproves us, he threatens us. If we were as these renegade spirits, which say: To what purpose do you preach so much unto us: If God have elected and chosen us unto himself, we cannot perish: and if we be reprobate, what shall all the doctrine, that shall ever be heard avail us? yea, but all agrees very well, when we exceed not our bounds. We have already said, that faith comes from election. Then like as God has chosen us, so also he calls us in time, as afterwards shall be handled more at large. For the place will serve there more fitly.

But however it be, God is not contrary to himself: and like as he testifies unto us, that it is by his free mercy, that he enlightens us by the faith of his Gospel, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: so will he that we walk in fear & carefulness, that we be touched with his threatenings, that we be gathered unto him: all this he wills.

And indeed, mark these two sentences, that men with their impudence & rashness would ween to be contrary: and nevertheless they agree very well one with the other. Jesus Christ says: Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, & I will refresh you, & you shall find rest to your souls. See how we are all bidden by the Son of God, & not only two or three, but all in general: For he says: Come all you that are heavy laden, and yet in another place he says: No man can come unto me, except it be given him of my father.

None therefore can come unto Jesus Christ, unless he be drawn by the heavenly father. It seems that this is contrary, yea he that would judge thereof according to man's reason: to say, that Jesus Christ invites us all unto him: and further adds, that none can come unto

him, unless the Father draw him. Very well: but (as I have already said) when God generally sets salvation before us in Jesus Christ his only son, it is to make the reprobate so much the more inexcusable for their unthankfulness, inasmuch as they have despised so great a benefit: in the meantime the elect are touched, and God does not only speak outwardly to them, but also inwardly.

And see why in another place our Lord Jesus Christ says: Whosoever has been taught of God my father, the same shall come unto me. But, as I have said, when the Gospel is preached in the name of God, this is as much as if he himself did speak in his own person: and yet all come not to Jesus Christ. There are a great many that go back the more when they have heard the Gospel: for then the devil kindles them in such a rage, that they are more outrageous than ever before, & this comes to pass, because there is a twofold hearing: the one is preaching: For the voice of a man will not enter into the hearts of his hearers. I speak, but it behooves that I hear myself being taught by the spirit of God: For otherwise the word which proceeds from my mouth, should profit me no more than it does all others, except it be given me from above, and not out of mine own head.

Therefore the voice of man is nothing but a sound that vanishes in the air, and notwithstanding it is the power of God to salvation to all believers (says Saint Paul.) When then God speaks unto us, by the mouth of men, then he adds the inward grace of his holy spirit, to the end, that the doctrine be not unprofitable, but that it may bring forth fruit. See then how we hear the heavenly father: that is to say: when he speaks secretly unto us by his holy spirit: & then we come unto our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark then, the sum of that we have to learn: that is, when God declares unto us his eternal election, & that he has given us such a

testimony, that we cannot doubt thereof: when he has showed us that this is our benefit & salvation: and so that we take not too much liberty, to wrangle against him, and to enter into crooked & overthwart disputations, that then the whole shall profit us. For it is certain, that this is the true rejoicing of the faithful, to be instructed concerning this election of God.

Moreover: when we see the wicked to cast forth their cavils against God, & their slanders to pervert all, and to bring this doctrine into hatred, let us not think it strange: for it must needs be that they declare themselves to be reprobates. I have said, that we must rest ourselves in the everlasting council of God, whereby he has chosen some, & cast off others. If now the reprobate come to fight against the truth of God, it is no new thing: For they are appointed to this, and it must needs be that they declare themselves to be such as they are: and we must call to mind that sentence of Hosea which is put in the end of his Book: The ways of the Lord are good & right: also The righteous will walk in them, but the wicked shall fall therein.

Now he adds also: Who is wise that will understand this? And who is a prudent man that will understand these things? The Prophet shows that when we speak of the judgments of God, it behooves that we have a special wisdom to receive them: and shall this wisdom be found in all our brains? that is far off. So then it behooves that we have a wisdom given us by the mere mercy of God.

Now that which follows is to show us, that this is a rare and most excellent thing, when men shall be apt to be taught and modest, and that they shall yield to be led by God, and shall suffer themselves to be governed by his word, when they shall receive full instruction, which shall be unto them a good food for their souls: When this shall

come to pass, it must be acknowledged to be a rare and singular benefit of God, and must assure us that he has blessed us.

And therefore it behooves that we be armed and prepared against all offenses. If we see that the wicked shall come to push with their horns against God, and to bark and show their teeth as Mastiffs, when they cannot bite, then let us practice this doctrine of the Prophet, when he says that the ways of God are righteous, & good, yea and the righteous shall walk in them. We shall always find this, so that we have not a malicious and froward spirit, that may turn us from God: but let us be quiet, and let us ask nothing, but that our Lord show us the path that we ought to follow: when we shall be such, it is certain that we shall always find even ground, and there shall be no question, that we should walk and take our pleasure. Behold, I say, the joy we shall have, when we shall walk in the Lord's ways: but contrariwise it is said, that the wicked shall fall. And where? Shall it be in hell? Shall it be in the Devil's way? It is said that it shall be in the very ways of God, that all that shall be set forth unto them of the judgments of God, of his eternal counsel, of his providence, & of his fatherly love, he bears to his children: in all these (says he) the wicked shall fall.

So let us be in such wise established, that all the ruins and falls which we shall see before our eyes, hinder us not from marching always forwards in that good way which our Lord does set before us. But it behooves us oftentimes to remember that which is here handled by Moses? And that is, he says expressly,

"That the one shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."

In speaking of the stronger, it is to show us that when God's election is steadfast and undoubted, and that we are upheld by his holy spirit,

we must no longer fear: & this is a very profitable point, yea necessary. For what is our condition? There needs but one puff of wind to beat us down, & there needs but a fly to dazzle our eyes: and yet we are here laid open to so many combats, as nothing more. Behold our enemies which are in number infinite: and I speak not of those which we see with the eye, but of spiritual enemies: For the air is full of devils, which lie in wait for us, yea which are as roaring lions, besides their slights. Alas what shall we be able to do? It must needs be that we be in distress & vexation continually & without end, & that we be as poor people stricken through, if we knew not that our Lord has our salvation in his own hand, and that he will keep it. Saint Peter says that it is well kept in hope, and that faith is as it were a capcase: but he sends us to God: and our Lord Jesus Christ has yet declared this more plainly unto us, when he says, that all that was given unto him of his father, shall not perish. And why so? The father who has given you (says he) unto me, is stronger than all. So then, he says that we may rejoice in this, that God will have pity upon us until the end, and that he will keep us: and although he suffer us to stumble, yea so as we fall, yet we shall be recovered & upheld by his hand. And how is it that we can trust in this? Without election it is impossible▪ but when we know that the father has committed us into the keeping of his son, we are certain, that we shall be maintained by him unto the end: For we have his promise whereby he has bound himself unto us, to preserve us: & farther he makes it until the last day, until the resurrection.

And for as much as the beginning and end of our salvation is in him, see in whom we may rejoice ourselves: That is, that in acknowledging our weaknesses & brittleness, and that we are nothing, and that we want all things: yet we may say: the Lord who has called me unto himself, will finish his own work: as is said in the 138th Psalm. "Lord, you will not leave the work of your own hands in the midst."

So then we must hold fast this doctrine, that the one shall be more strong: For our faith shall remain victorious over all the world. And how? It behooves us (I say) to have our foundation upon the election of God: that we may be so settled thereon, that we know that our Lord being our Father, will not suffer that we perish, seeing we are his children.

Now Moses adds by and by that the elder shall serve the younger. In this we have yet a more ample confirmation of that which I touched even now, that is, that we must be so assured of our salvation, although that we be weak, & that the world despise us, and we have no greater show of strength. And why so? God would that we should for a time be the lesser: that is to say, that we should be little and despised to the end, that his glory might be the more known & esteemed. For if we had greatness and glory in ourselves, & dignity, it is certain that these should be as veils, to shadow the mere and free bounty of God: but when we are weak in ourselves, see wherein it is known, that it is he who does all: & it must needs be that his hand be in such sort advanced, that we come not to mingle ourselves therein, and that we throw not forth our clouds to hinder that the praise of our salvation be wholly attributed to him.

Mark then that we have here to learn, that is on the one side, although that we be weak, that we cease not to go freely forward, knowing that our strength consists in God: and when he does not fully show it, it is to the end that our weakness should be an occasion to humble us. See this for one principal point. And in very deed we should be cold, yea and quite negligent in calling upon him, if we knew not our necessity: but when we see that we can do nothing, then we must have our refuge to him, who can supply all our wants: and then we shall render unto him the sacrifice of praise which is due unto him, after that we have been heard of him.

In the meantime also we have to note that God does not at the first dash, show to the view of the eye our salvation: but it must be hid in appearance, and that for a time we be as castaways, and that the wicked tread us under their feet, & that they be in degree without comparison, more high than we: Notwithstanding let it suffice us, that we are as a precious treasure before God. Behold also why our Lord Jesus Christ says: "Fear not, my little flock, but rejoice, and be not as a scattered and discomfited flock." And why so? Because the father delights in thee.

Mark then from whence we must have all our rejoicing: mark of whom we must be armed, to have victory, and to triumph against all temptations. When we see in these days the enemies of the Gospel, and the Devil's supporters, to make their brags, and make no account of others in comparison of themselves, and when in the meantime they despise us: and not only that, but further account us as most desperate creatures, as though we were unworthy (as men say) to be eaten of dogs. When therefore we shall see this at this day, yea, that the greatest number shall be as poor starvelings, and that they shall have no bread to eat, that they shall not have their ease nor their commodity: Let us remember that, that is here spoken, that the greater shall serve the lesser.

Now this service came not to pass at the first dash. For we shall see afterwards that Jacob came to crouch before his brother, and called him his Lord: he trembled as a poor Lamb before him, and then gave him all his goods as a prey. And where was this subjection of Esau? where was the superiority of Jacob, when he submitted himself in such sort? It seemeth that he gives up all: but he knoweth that God would not accomplish this at the first day.

Mark then why he did bear his poverty so patiently: because God would (as if a man might say) that he should creep upon the earth, and yet this shall not hinder, but that he should always attain to that salvation, whereunto he was called. And why so? For God depends not upon all these earthly things. And which is more (as I have already said) he wills that we begin here, to humble ourselves before him: following that which I alleged ere while from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ, that so we know that our Heavenly Father be well pleased with us, we pass not for the rest, or rather that we be not so shaken that this do deprave us and bring us out of taste, and so hinder us from doing good: but that we doubt not that amidst all the troubles and griefs that may happen unto us, we have always wherein to rejoice.

For who shall separate us from the love that God has borne us in Christ our Lord? seeing that God has chosen us in our Lord Jesus Christ, & that he has called us to the faith of his Gospel, & has imprinted in our hearts the testimony of his fatherly love, we will always defy our enemies, although we be poor and feeble, yea though we be nothing in the common opinion of men: yet we shall not cease to be grounded upon this promise: That the greater shall serve the less and younger. And seeing it is so, let us not desire to be great after the world: for although that we be contemptible & despised, yet this hinders us not from being the heirs of the world: although we neither have lands nor possessions, yet do all things belong unto us, & contrariwise the wicked have an horrible and heavy account to make, for that they in such sort devour God's benefits, and rejoice so much concerning those riches which he has given them, and yet glorify not God in them.

But they must pay fully dearly for them: and as for us, although we be stripped of all riches, that we be in opprobrium & reproach: to be

short, that there is nothing but poverty in us, yet seeing we know that he hath his hand stretched out to uphold us, we may boast ourselves against all our enemies. And in the meantime let us remember that which is said in Isaiah, that we are as a precious crown in the hand of the Lord, and as the ring of his finger, and as his seal, and that neither Egypt nor Assyria: that is to say, the greatest Monarchies of the world, are so highly esteemed of him as we are: not for any value that is in us (as I have said already:) but because it has pleased him to choose us, & to reserve us in the number of those whom he will have to himself: and we know this, forasmuch as we see through faith and hope, that he has drawn us from those gulfs, in which we were, to the end he might bring us to an everlasting inheritance.

Now let us fall down before the face of our good God, acknowledging our offenses, praying him, that he will in such sort make us to feel them, that it may be to spoil us of all wicked lusts and rebellions, and that we may be so renewed, that we may ratify our vocation in living holy and confirming ourselves wholly to his righteousness, and that he will so support us in our infirmities, that he suffer us not however we be encompassed about with so many enemies, that we never fail: but that he will supply all our weaknesses, to the end that his election may declare his power even to the end, and that we may in such sort feel the fruit thereof, that we may have wherein to glorify him, both in life and death. And so let us all say, O Almighty God & heavenly Father, we acknowledge and confess in ourselves as the truth is, that we are not worthy, &c.

## **The Fourth Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 25.**

24 Therefore when the days of her deliverance were come, behold, twins were in her womb.

25 So he that came out first was red, and he was all over as a rough garment, and they called his name Esau.

26 And afterward came his brother out: and his hand held Esau by the heel: therefore his name was called Jacob. Now Isaac was threescore years old when Rebecca bore them.

27 And the boys grew, and Esau was a cunning hunter, and was a man of labor: but Jacob was a simple man, and dwelled in tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau, for venison was his meat, but Rebecca loved Jacob.

Because the election of GOD is secret in itself, it is necessary that it show itself with time, as God caused His works to come to perfection. For it suffices not that God have once chosen us, and that He have marked us, but He must also continue this to the end, and that He declare that His election is not in vain, but that He has His strength and power to conduct us to salvation. Now, He does this after diverse sorts: For God is not bound to keep always one course: He has His means, such as it pleases Him to appoint. Sometimes He shows His election very quickly; sometimes He defers it for a long space; and they that think that there is a certain seed in all those whom God has elected, so as men may discern them from others because they are

inclined to good and have some affection to serve God, they foully overshoot themselves, and are also convinced by experience.

John the Baptist was sanctified from the womb of his mother; but it is far otherwise in many others. For God suffers His elect sometimes to be as scattered sheep, and they seem as though they were altogether lost; and this is to the end to give the greater glory to His grace. As we see now some sign in Jacob, that God had chosen him, and rejected his brother Esau. For Jacob held the heel of his brother, as if he had fought against him. And this came not to pass by chance, neither was it done by nature; but God showed, as it were with the finger, that Esau was the firstborn, and yet was nevertheless put back; and Jacob, who was the inferior in his birth, should yet in time be preferred. Mark then what we have to learn upon this place: that is, that God will approve that which He has pronounced as we saw yesterday: That the greater shall serve the lesser.

And this has already been showed in the birth of two infants. But of this example, we have to gather in general, that those whom God has chosen, He has prevented; and by this means does ratify His counsel and decree when His execution appears. And so, though we cannot enter so far to know who they are that were elected before the foundation of the world; notwithstanding, our election shall be testified unto us, so far forth as shall be necessary. For if God (as a man would say) does keep the protocol or original draft thereof with Himself, it follows not but that He does give us such testimony thereof that we may be assured that He both is and will be a father unto us to the end; and that we should call upon Him in this assurance. For it is not said here, albeit there were a vocation (as the holy scripture speaks), that is to say, that He had declared unto Jacob that He had elected him. This will come with the time; but it is said simply that God had showed it as it were to the eye, that the

answer which He had given to Rebecca was not in vain. Why so? The effect appeared in this, that Jacob held the heel of his brother. But here by the way, God would show by this figure that His elect come not to their end without many combats. It is true that Jacob knew not what this meant, and his age also did not suffer it; but this notwithstanding must serve to teach us and is set forth as it were to declare unto us that God will have us to fight, however He has taken us into His custody, yea, though we be in His protection and conductions, and He will have us to hope for salvation from Him, and that what He has begun shall be accomplished.

Although then that all this be true, yet will he not have us sluggish: but he will that every one of us strive to the end, that we may be led to that end whereto he has called us. Mark then that which we have to learn of this which Moses rehearses, that Jacob held the heel of his brother. Now he adds:

"And the elder was called Esau, and the other Jacob."

As touching the second, it is as if a man should call him Heelholder, but of Esau it is said, that he came from the womb of his mother altogether rough and covered with hair, as if he had been a man already. See also from whence he took his name.

We see then the difference between these two: that is, that a man would have said that Esau was to be far advanced above his brother. For we see him thoroughly fashioned, he is big, and shows great strength: To be short, he is not as a child, but as a man. But of Jacob, there is no other thing, but the hand that held him by the heel, and he was as a thing born before his time; and when they grew, he continued even so. For Esau was a Hunter, a man of travail: (as if a man would say) nothing but strength. Of Jacob it is very true that the name which Moses uses is taken in good part and signifies sound or

perfect: However, it was a simplicity which was opposed against all that which was more apparent in Esau; and in very deed Moses adds, that he kept the house, that he was as it were a Cook always sitting in the Ashes. Mark then what we have to consider in Esau and Jacob.

Now this is an instruction to confirm that we have treated of before: That is to say, that GOD has not chosen men according to the outward show they may have: but contrariwise, that which is accounted most excellent, he forsakes and despises: And that which is as rejected of men, that does he advance. We see it always: but yet there is no doubt, but the Holy Ghost meant to set forth this in the person of our father Jacob, to the end that we should learn to beat down all foolish presumption, and should not search in ourselves, why GOD does choose us, why also he continues his grace towards us: but that we should know that he would be glorified in our littleness: and we shall have well profited when this doctrine shall be imprinted in our hearts.

For there is nothing that more turns us away from God than when we desire to have some virtue worthy of praise: but we must be utterly spoiled thereof, or else we shall be so puffed up that the grace of GOD cannot enter into us. So much the more then it behooves us to lay good hold upon this which is so necessary for us: that is to say, that when God chooses us, that this is not (as men say) for our fair eyes. And finally, if we be despised of the world, let us not therefore be discouraged: as we have showed, that it ought thoroughly to content us that we be accepted of God, although the world disdains us. For we see what was in Jacob: one still sitting in the house, as if a man would say, a Do-nothing, or Idle body. It is true that he was entire, but whence was it? Whence was this simplicity taken? Did he any notable thing? Had he any reputation? He had nothing at all. But see Esau, who was as it were above the clouds even from his birth, he

was a man already, he had strength in himself: and further, when he grew, he had great industry, so that it seemed that he was to work wonders.

Very well, in this we are taught that all comes of God. For if we should seek the cause of election in men, it is certain that every one would give his voice to Esau without doubt. But notwithstanding all this, God prefers Jacob: and why so? This is quite contrary to what we imagine. So then we have to mark that God has in such sort dispensed his grace, that he would have men to know that it was his only goodness that moved him to love Jacob. Now this doctrine is well worthy to be meditated upon all the days of our life: and this is (as I have said) to beat down all the overweening that men have in themselves, to the end that there be nothing but the mere mercy of God that may shine in this thing: and in the meantime let us know that the Church was always small in her beginnings, yea, and that God has afterward such sort advanced it, that on men's parts their infirmity must appear, and that they must always acknowledge it, to the end men submit themselves to such a condition.

And again, however it be, let us know that God will never forsake his own work, but will bring it to his right perfection, although it be not known of men at the first dash: for neither ought it to be so, neither is it profitable. Again, if God give any sign that he have chosen us unto himself, and that this be showed even from our infancy, we have so much the more wherefore to glorify God: for the more his grace is enlarged, the more praise it deserves: but if we remain for a time as rejected, and that God makes no semblance of having any regard unto us: but rather that we be as it were forgotten, and in the end he calls us back again when we have for a long time gone astray: herein also shall we have a double occasion to praise him. In short, however he works in us, it behooves that our mouth be always open to

acknowledge his goodness and mercy. There are some who from their childhood will declare that GOD has kept them, as if he had held them by the hand, and should bring them forth to say: These are mine, and indeed they have a good instruction from their infancy, and further it shall profit in them, in such sort as men shall say: Behold a seed of God.

Now, these (as I have said) are deeply bound to acknowledge that God had given them this privilege. For what have they more than others? We are altogether corrupted in Adam. So then, when God leads them as it were by a continual thread from their birth, even until their old age, so much the more are they bound unto him. But there are others who are as poor and miserable creatures: whom men would say that God had wholly cast from him, and the one sort are lewd and dissolute in their youth, the other sort miserable idolaters: and whatsoever devotion they have, yet nevertheless this is always to estrange them so much the more from God, and to provoke his wrath, yes, sometimes they are enemies to all truth: as we may see in the example of Saint Paul, who was as an outrageous beast shedding innocent blood, and striving for nothing more as a ravening wolf than to scatter all the Churches. Again, see the Corinthians, who were whoremasters and given to all kind of villainies, as Saint Paul declares: And as much is said of the Romans. "Ye were," says he, "in times past, both whoremongers and proud persons, and given to all oppression and deceit, yielding all your members to evil, and to the service of sin." And a little after he says to the Ephesians: "Ye were in times past without God, without any hope of life, ye were altogether darkness, ye were in everlasting death."

Now when our Lord, to the end to humble us, shall suffer us for a time to be so scattered, and then shall suddenly call us to himself: let us acknowledge and say, "Alas! we ought not only to magnify GOD

for that he hath chosen us, as we see the fruit thereof: but also because he hath drawn us from this gulf wherein we were." And so much the more must we strive and redeem the time past, as Saint Paul speaks thereof, in that we have alleged: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now you are light in the Lord," says he, "and therefore walk as Children of light." And let us often remember that which our Lord Jesus Christ says. "There are many sheep that are not of this fold." For he spoke of the Gentiles, who were shut out from all hope of salvation. He calls them sheep, not in respect of themselves: For they were savage beasts: but in respect of God's election: although they were a scattered people, yet he says, that he would gather them together. Therefore when it pleases God to withdraw us from dissipation wherein we have been, let us learn to give ear to the voice of this great Pastor: not only by giving some outward sign that we do allow it: but that it be to follow him and obey him in all things.

Mark then what it is that we have to learn out of this place. And further let us not be ashamed when the Lord shall not give unto his faithful and to his whole Church such a goodly show amongst men, to the end to be had in reputation: Let us not be ashamed of our baseness, so that he be glorified. As now it seems that the Church must be trodden under feet: and we see also how profane people and the Children of this world make no reckoning of those whom God has gathered to himself.

Now let us bear this patiently, after the example of our father Jacob: and let it not trouble us if the world (in a manner) does spit in our face, so that we be approved of GOD. Mark then, how every one of us has to practice this doctrine in himself, and also in the whole body of the Church.

And again, although we are not esteemed of the world, and that few do allow us and clap their hands at us, yet God works in such sort that that which is most contemptible in the world, and in the outward show thereof, is more esteemed before God than that which has great show and setting out before men. And herein is that accomplished, which is spoken in Saint Luke. That which is high and excellent here beneath is not therefore esteemed of God, but much rather is sometimes an abomination unto him: as it is certain that the virtues of Esau shall always be praised, if men were judges: but yet Jacob's simplicity before God and his Angels is in greater estimation.

Let us therefore march on as our Lord Jesus has commanded us: and let it not grieve us, though there appear not in us at the first dash, these gifts which God has put in us. For example, there are many who are nothing worth in respect of God, yet they have a goodly show, and also there be occasion thereof. Men shall find great personages, of great estate and quality, who shall have great valor, and be in great authority: shall be in honor and dignity: and farther there shall be no extreme covetousness in them: to be short, there shall appear such an honesty in them, that you would think them Angels, and all men will extol them everywhere: and in the meantime, there shall be poor handymen, husbandmen, and poor idiots, who have no opportunity to show themselves: For they shall be busied in their shop and small household: they must travail to nourish their poor children. A man shall hear no great fame of them, they are not eloquent, to show forth any great wisdom: and when a man shall hear them speak, he shall see nothing but folly, according to the common opinion: and yet GOD has elected and chosen them. He allows that which seems to be of no value: For albeit it seems that these are base things, that a man sew or do some other thing, and

take pain, yet this is a service that GOD more esteems of, than we can imagine.

So then, when we know that we are nothing in outward show, let us not think our state and condition to be the worse for it (and as I have said already) let us not be ashamed of our infirmity: and in the meantime, let us lift up our eyes on high, and though we lie in the ashes, let us know that as much happened to our father Jacob before, who was a figure of all the elect of God and of his children. Now it follows.

That Jacob was loved by his mother, and Esau by his father. And this serves well to show that there was no such perfection in Isaac as there ought to have been: For he was not ignorant of that which had been spoken: That the greater should serve the lesser: He knew full well that so was the will of God, that Esau the elder should yield both the place and degree of honor unto his brother: and yet he loved Esau: it seems herein that he would resist the counsel of GOD. And what means he herein? When he will cast his whole love towards Esau: Yet God will reign in the end and his election must stand fast, yea though all the world should strive against it.

Lo, Isaac, who is very blockish: yet there is more: for it seems that he is led by a brutish affection. For why did he love Esau? Because that he brought him Venison. He loved him therefore for his tooth's sake. Behold an ancient man: and who by reason of his age ought to have been stayed and settled: he should no more have been led of his foolish and inconstant affections, that for his tooth's sake and licorishness, he should have forgotten that which God had pronounced, yea, by an unchangeable decree: that Jacob must govern, and that he should be heir of the promise: and yet that Isaac makes no reckoning of it. But here we see that the Jews are too blind,

vaunting themselves in their fathers, as though the dignity which they sometimes had, came from the holiness and virtues of men. For it is certain that Isaac, as much as in him lay, overthrew the election of God: not that he had a will so to do. For if a man should have asked him, how now? Will you resist God? Will you let, that he shall not put in execution, that which he has pronounced? Will you alter that which he has pronounced by his mouth? He would have said, No: and his intent was not such. But however it be, he is driven and drawn that way.

So then we may not say that Isaac went about to help the election of God nor set it forward: but contrariwise he hindered it. Now by this we see that all mouths must be shut, and that men pretend not to have had anything in their persons, to say that God should confirm unto them the blessings which he had already given them. To be short, we see hereby, that like as the election of God is free and undeserved in its first beginning and foundation, and in full force, so also it behooves that God show unto the end, that there is nothing but his only mercy and that all that is said on man's behalf, do cease and be abolished, and that this is not, either of the willer or of the runner (as Saint Paul says) Romans 9. Mark then what we have to learn. Now in the meantime we see also the steadfastness which is in this counsel of God, whereby he chooses those whom he thinks good. So we have to resolve ourselves, although the whole world should labor to overthrow our salvation, that yet it will remain sure, so that we have our refuge always to that which has been shown us before: that is to say, That our Lord Jesus Christ has taken into his keeping all that the father has given him, as being his own: and that nothing thereof shall perish, forasmuch as God is stronger than men: for it is thither that he does lead us: The father who has given you unto me, is stronger than all.

So then let us learn to stay ourselves wholly upon the invincible power of God when there is any question of being assured that in calling upon him we shall be heard, and that we doubt not but that as he has brought us into a good way, so he will give us perseverance: and although that we be weak and frail, yet he will not suffer us to fall: but we shall always be led in such sort that he will more and more increase his power in us. We must therefore come even thus far, namely that Jacob had not only those his enemies which had no fear of GOD, and were irreligious, but even his own father Isaac: yea who was then as chief in the Church: God had put him in trust as it were with his covenant, to the end that he should be the treasurer thereof, and dispense it: and yet nevertheless he (as it should seem) was an enemy to the election of Jacob. Wherefore if we see many contrarieties, and that it seems our salvation must be overthrown by many means, and that we see no issue, let us then know that God will be victorious in the end: and whatever weakness be found in us, nevertheless he will not cease to proceed, and although there be resistance and contradiction here beneath, yet nevertheless he will overcome all, and bring it well about.

But by the way, we are here admonished by the example of Isaac, to hold ourselves under the bridle. For if this happened unto such a man as Isaac was, so excellent and of an angelic holiness, that he resisted God, what shall become of us in comparison? It is certain, that we shall every day be overtaken a hundred times with some vain fancy, that we shall rush against God, although we have no such purpose. We have great need therefore to distrust our own judgment, and to call upon God, to the end that he will govern us by his Holy Spirit: otherwise (as I have said) we are as wretched strays, and we shall go hither and thither at all adventures. And when we ween to be very wise, there will be nothing but folly in us, yea rebellion,

although it be not with our wills and knowledge. Mark this then for one lesson.

But we must mark here the cause which is here noted by Moses when he says that Isaac loved Esau: And wherefore did he love him? Because that Venison was his meat. Therefore let us take heed that we be not led by our carnal and earthly appetites, if we will keep our array towards God. It is true that to eat and drink are not condemned. For God has placed us in this world under that condition that we should enjoy his creatures: and seeing he has ordained us to eat and to drink, it is certain that we offend him not when we desire to have for our necessities, and search out also the use of those benefits which he has prepared for us. For it is not said without cause that we must do all things in his name, yea both in eating and drinking: but in that we be corrupted, it cannot be but there will be always excess in our appetites, and this excess makes us to forget our duties towards God: so as we are altogether drawn away on every side: and when we think to do our duties, we are far therefrom. But Isaac ought always to have had this before his eyes, yea and he ought to have had it engraved in his heart, this voice should have sounded in his ears, to wit, that the greater should serve the less: he ought without end, and without ceasing, thus to have thought: well, forasmuch as God will have his election to remain in Jacob, it behooves that I agree unto it. But in the meantime his meat turns him, and draws him quite contrary. Let us therefore be well advised (as I have already said) on our parts, to repress our desires, yea though they be natural, and of themselves not unlawful. But to the end that there be no excess nor intemperance: Let us be advised (I say) to check and to tame them, in such sort that they never turn us away or hinder us from ordering ourselves according to the will of God. Mark therefore briefly what we have to learn here.

But here also we see that Rebecca had an affection better guided than her husband. It is very true that always men shall see (or for the most part) that if the Father love one of his Children, the mother will set her love quite contrary: A man may see these contentions in most houses. Also it may be that Rebecca had conceived some kind of jealousy: for as much as she saw Esau preferred: and therefore she loved Jacob the better, as much as he was not so acceptable to his father, nor had no such favor: but for as much (as we shall see hereafter) that she had regard unto God's election, and that she always held that which had been said, that Jacob must be preferred: we have here to judge that she was not passionate and affected, as women that would lightly set themselves against their husbands, when they see that some of their children shall not be so much esteemed, they will the more set their affections upon them. But we cannot judge so of Rebecca: and why so? Because we see (as I have already said) that she always referred herself to God, and meant to obey that which he had pronounced. She would undoubtedly that both the children might have been reserved in the Church: but seeing she saw the one shut out, and that there was none but the lesser and inferior that God allowed of, she yielded thereto. Now here we see that our Lord sometimes will suffer those, which have the more virtues and greater gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet nevertheless to fall: and that they who were not yet so advanced as they should outgo them, I mean in some respect. For if we make comparison of Isaac with Rebecca, it is certain that he having been brought up in the house of his father, and having received so great instruction in his youth, had generally a greater faith than Rebecca. But behold a particular action, wherein he failed, and wherein his vice showed itself. And yet Rebecca who lately crawled out of a den of idolatry: as we know that in her father's house, there was nothing but superstitions, the country was altogether corrupted: this poor woman, although she knew not God in her youth: yet

notwithstanding she was so well taught and instructed of the Holy Ghost, that she out-went her husband. Now for this cause, they too whom God has reached out the hand betimes, and whom he has lifted up, to be as mirrors unto others: let them learn always to walk with greater carefulness. And why so? For there needs but one wry step to make them to fall so grossly, that everyone will be ashamed of them.

And therefore let us learn, that albeit our Lord have generally framed and fashioned us by his Holy Spirit in such sort, that everyone has us in admiration, that yet in particular cases, we may offend. Therefore let us always stand upon our watch. Moreover, they which are the most excellent, when they shall come to fail in some point, let them not make a buckler of this, that they have done so many good deeds, and worthy of praise: let them not allege their valiant deeds (as they say), but let them acknowledge themselves for such as they be, and say: Well, I perceive that God would have me to acknowledge that I am a weak man: and farther that I should acknowledge in general, that it is not in men to uphold themselves: for there needs but one fault alone to cause us to be cut off from the church. And when God has cast us off, what shall become of us? So let us learn all these things in the person of our father Isaac, when we see that he was so blinded, and that he never remembered, that he was as a rebel to God, in esteeming that, which God had rejected, and despising his younger son: to whom notwithstanding God had given this testimony: That he must rule in his house.

Now in the meantime, although that Rebecca had been well guided in her affection, and that she had sought to obey God: yet it could not be but there must be some quarrel between them: as oftentimes it falls out. And this is that which Moses says. That Isaac loved Esau, and Rebecca loved Jacob: and when he speaks so, it is as if he would

show that there was some strife in the house, and that they could not agree together, to say, that the husband and the wife should love their children alike, as by nature they ought to have been inclined thereto: or rather that they knew that the will of God was that they should have loved the younger. Now we are warned in this behalf, that albeit our affections be well grounded and tend to a good end, that notwithstanding there be always crossings which are blameworthy.

As for example. I seek to follow God, and fully to conform myself unto his will: but there are resistings, and it must needs be that I must incur displeasure of the one, and purchase an enemy of the other, if I discharge my duty. Likewise it is true, that the beginning shall be good, when I shall desire to do well, and that I shall only look unto God: but ever anon it will befall unto us, that in our good zeal we shall be too excessive, and that we shall have carnal passions in us: To be short: they who shall be the best guided, and who have greatest perfection, it is very certain that they shall yet pass measure in this place, and that they shall show themselves men: and so much the more ought we to suspect our passions, and albeit we see that the end be not good, yet we shall not cease to fall therein. Again, we also have a good warning to leave all contradictions: For it is not without cause that the scripture exhorts us so often unto this union, to be of one mind, and of one mouth. And why so? For when we agree in such sort, each one stirs up his neighbor, and helps to bring him unto God. But contrariwise, when we are quarreling in contention and strife, not only one lets and hinders another (as it is commonly said there needs but one restive Horse to hinder the whole team:) but yet there is a worse matter: to wit, that when we strive for the service of God, we cease not to forget ourselves in some respects, and many things escape us, which we would not let slip, if we were out of strife and contention. This therefore is the matter we have to learn. And

these examples are daily seen amongst us in the church. For the best servants of God and they that are endowed with most excellent graces, yea and who strive for the truth, yet nevertheless cannot always so bridle themselves, that they be not quarreling, and show themselves men, and yet God allows their zeal and that which they do. And why so? Because they have a good beginning, and they have a right end: but as I have said, there is always infirmity mingled therewith. Let us therefore (say I) always mark this, in this example of Isaac and Rebecca. Again, we have further to note, that if sometimes we shall not agree as we ought and as were meet and convenient and as we ought, to bend and enforce ourselves, that yet nevertheless we must make no divorce betwixt ourselves, neither be quite separated asunder. For although this was a notable vice, that Isaac and Rebecca were thus divided in the love, which they bore unto their children, yet they continued to serve God: and Isaac did never pretend to abolish this oracle: that is to say, this same answer which God had given, that Jacob must govern.

Now therefore we see here how the husband and the wife are at strife, and that in such a matter of importance, as whereupon depended the salvation of the world. For the question is here of the eternal election of God, the question is of the whole church of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head thereof: and behold some crooked controversies betwixt Isaac and his wife. Yet this means not that Isaac meant to overthrow all: but he understood it not, and was confounded in himself. Likewise therefore, when through ignorance and error, it shall sometimes come to pass, that we shall be in trouble, and that the devil shall thrust in his foot, and that we shall not be able to speak with one and the same mouth: notwithstanding, we must always keep the principal: that is, we must always agree in this, that we hold God for our father: and that we know that there is no true holy unity, but in Jesus Christ: that we hold, I say the

principles of our faith: and if we cannot comprehend all things so distinctly as were to be wished, let the ignorant and weak be humbled, and let them not be discouraged.

Likewise let them that are more forward, bear with the weak, waiting when God will turn them, and take from them these opinions, wherein they are so troubled. This is that which Saint Paul says unto the Philippians: For he shows how we ought to be knit together, and what the knot of our concord and brotherhood is. Now having showed, that he concludes, that therefore there should not be diversities of opinions amongst us, and that our speeches likewise should not be diverse. But yet (saith he) If you cannot come to such perfection, and that some go as it were halting, and cannot overtake others, which are not so quick to comprehend all: Wait (saith he) until God reveal it unto you.

Mark then the first thing that we have to do, that is, to agree in the pure and simple truth of God. But forasmuch as it is not given to all at the first dash, to have certain understanding of all points of religion: very well, if there be any ignorance, let them reach out their hand to them who are so besotted, yes let them take heed that they be not willful on their parts. For sometimes, yes most commonly a man shall see, that the blindest are boldest and rashest: and further there will be such a willfulness, that a man can gain nothing of them. But S. Paul to remedy this mischief, says: Wait till God reveal it unto you. This then is that we have to learn: but let us also remember that which he sets down: namely, that when we shall agree in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we respect nothing but his glory, that always we keep our course, and if there be some little strife, that this separate us not one from another. For it shall be enough when we have this key, though in many other things we be not so resolved as were necessary: yet if we be not quite withdrawn and turned from

our Lord Jesus Christ, it is enough. Besides when we shall tend to his glory, every one shall know, yes the most forward, that they are yet far off. What is the cause that those who are learned and exercised in the scripture, do disdain their brethren when they see them ignorant? It is forasmuch as it seems unto them that there is nothing wanting in themselves: but if we know what it is to aspire to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to come to the glory of his resurrection, we will say always with Saint Paul, that we have not attained unto it. When therefore every one shall know, that there is yet something lacking in himself, it shall do us no hurt, and we shall not think it strange to call our brethren, although it be a far off. Go to let us go forward. It is true that there is great difference between them that have the gift of interpreting the Scriptures, and those that are poor and simple idiots: they will know well that there is one God, who is their father by our Lord Jesus Christ, but yet they cannot expound a place of holy Scripture: and yet notwithstanding they cease not to walk on in one and the same path: and those which are the most forward, although they come sooner to the goal, yet they must always wait for the other. Mark then how we have to do, according as it is shown unto us, and how we may learn it, by the example which is here contained.

But now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging of our faults, praying him that he will in such sort make us to feel them, that it may be to the end we may be displeased therewith, and that we always may have an eye to our condition which is so miserable, to the end to have our refuge to his mercy: and that it will please him to receive us to mercy, and so to govern us by his holy spirit that we may be rid of all earthly passions. And seeing there are so many vices hidden in us, that we may take the greater pain to examine ourselves, to the end always to have recourse unto him, who is able to cleanse us: and that we may so fight, against whatsoever thing does hinder us from dedicating ourselves wholly to

his service, that in the meantime we know, that it is far off that our conflicts do deserve to be approved of him, but so far forth as he bears with our weakness. And also that we may have recourse unto his power, knowing the need that we have to be succored of him: and that by this means, we learn only to rejoice in him, and not to doubt but that as he has once reached us the hand, he will likewise continue more and more to strengthen us, until that we have overcome both the Devil, and all the assaults, that he can assail us with all. That not only, etc.

## **The Fifth Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 25.**

29 Now as Jacob was seething Pottage: Esau came out of the field and was hungry.

30 Wherefore Esau said unto Jacob: "Suffer me to kneel forth of this Pottage so red, for I am weary." Therefore everyone called his name Edom.

31 But Jacob answered, "Sell me now thy birthright."

32 And Esau said: "Behold I hasten to death: and what avails this birthright unto me?"

33 To whom Jacob said: "Swear unto me this day." And he swore unto him. So he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of Lentils and he did eat and drink and rose up, and went his way, and Esau contemned his birthright.

WE said yesterday that God approves and ratifies his election when he governs his children by his Holy Spirit, and that he makes them strive up to the heavenly life, giving them an affection to despise the world and to look up higher. Conversely, he reveals what man's nature is when he lets loose the bridle to those who are reprobates, so that they become like brute beasts, looking to nothing but this brittle and transitory life. We have the confirmation of this doctrine in the history which Moses recounts here: For on the one side, he sets Esau before us, who, returning out of the fields from hunting,

was like a famished wolf: he desires nothing but to eat, and moreover is content to sell his birthright with another, and here he renounces his birthright so that he may have something to fill his belly. He then esteems the pottage so highly that his birthright was nothing unto him in comparison thereof. Now let us mark (as it has already been touched before, and as we shall see more fully) that this was not an earthly privilege, to wit, that he should have a double portion, and that he should be advanced in his father's house; but it was to be the chief of the Church of God, waiting until our Lord Jesus Christ should appear for the salvation of the world. Now, although this was a thing of such importance, yet Esau prefers his belly, and he cares for nothing so that he may have food. On the other side, Jacob, although he had made ready his dinner, or his supper (albeit it were his refectory), and that he had an appetite to eat, yet he chose rather to abstain and deprive himself than to let slip the occasion of getting the birthright. We see then that Esau was but as a beastly man, who sought nothing but to be fed and nourished, yea, and to be well filled. Jacob is a weak man, subject to hunger and thirst; yet he bridles himself and looks up higher than to this world, and forgoes bodily meat to obtain a spiritual benefit, which was of more value than a hundred, yea, than ten thousand lives. Mark briefly what we have to learn from this history.

Now it is very true that a man might think at the first blush that this was but a childish toy. For what hurt was it in Esau, after he had labored and taken great pain, yea, to bring venison unto his father, if he were weary, if he were hungry and should demand to eat? It seems not that this should be imputed to him as a fault. And again, on the other side, some man might say, what cruelty was there in Jacob, seeing his brother in such want, not to succor him, at least with half of his repast? For he should not have waited for his brother's complaint and till he had cried from hunger, but rather

ought frankly to have offered him of that which he had prepared for himself. For if he had seen but a stranger to be so needy, so weary, and so weak, he must yet have given him some refreshment and alms.

But behold his own brother, for they were born both in one belly: yet he leaves him in this case and vouchsafes not to give him one spoonful of his pottage. A man might say, therefore, that Jacob was too uncourteous. And again. Why should he compel him to sell his birthright? For he put here the knife as it were to his throat, and we know that bargains are always of no force when there shall be any violence offered: If men do anything by constraint, or if they promise anything by compulsion rashly, they are not bound to keep it. But see Esau, who was hungry, he could do no more, he was so far past himself that he knows not what his birthright means. So then, besides the cruelty of Jacob, there was too gross an oversight: and when he bargained, whatsoever came between, yet this ought not in any case to hold by any right or reason. Well, notwithstanding all this, this is not recited to reprove Jacob, as though he had committed any fault or offended either God or his brother: But contrariwise the Holy Ghost gives him here testimony, that he shows us the way how to search after heavenly things, and that first of all we must seek the kingdom of God and renounce our own desires, or else in such wise captivate and bring them under that they hinder us not from looking always to the principal.

And contrariwise, the example of Esau is set before us (as the Apostle shows) to the end, we should not be profane as he was: that is to say, that we should not be given to the earth: but that we should think that this which is promised us belongs to eternal life. So then, we must not judge of this history after our natural opinion: but we must

weigh to what end and purpose it is here rehearsed, to the end we may the better make our profit of it.

Now I have already said in the first place, that God would as it were seal his election here, in the person of Jacob: and that he has showed also in the person of Esau, that he was of the number of those that were cast off from him. It is very certain that if Jacob had not been governed by the spirit of God, he had been altogether like his brother Esau. But we must see how the spirit of God was rather given unto him than unto Esau: We shall not find this diversity, but in the only free goodness of God. So then, let us know that Jacob was led with a holy affection, for as much as God had held him of the number and company of his children: as also St. Paul says: That we are the workmanship of God, created to good works, which he has prepared. He speaks not there of all men in general. It is true that God has created us all without difference: but there is a new creation in those whom God reforms and whom he purges from their wicked lusts, to the end that he may bring them to himself and conform them to his righteousness, so that they desire nothing more than to honor and serve him purely.

Mark therefore a second creation which God works in his children. So then, let us know that if God reaches out his hand unto us, to show us the way of salvation, if he gives us courage cheerfully to march forwards, and strengthens us also to continue therein, that then he shows that his election is not in vain and frivolous, but has its full effect and virtue. To conclude, when he abandons us, and that we are as strays throughout all our life, that we forget the salvation of our souls: let us know that herein he declares his curse upon us. And so let us learn to tremble, as often as we see men besotted in beastliness, so as they know not their own state and condition, neither to what end they were created, nor wherefore God has placed

them in the world: when we see this, it behooves us (I say) to tremble and to pray unto God, that he will not suffer us so to be estranged from him: but that he will always hold us in, and keep us, and that he will imprint in our hearts such an assurance of the hope which he has given us, that we may bear therein the right mark of his election, as if men spread a little wax upon a seal, the form of the seal will remain perfect, but the wax has the shape and image thereof. So, when our Lord engraves his fear in our hearts by his holy spirit, and such an obedience towards him, as his children ought to perform unto him, this is as if he should set upon us the seal of his election, and as if he should truly testify that he has adopted us, and that he is a Father unto us: For as much as we have the earnest of his free adoption: that is to say, the Holy Ghost. But now let us come to that, which is here handled particularly. It is said:

That Esau being returned, he asked of his brother Jacob, that he would give him of that red Pottage, and of that meat: He says it, but this was as it were in contempt: and yet herein we see that he was not so delicate and fine-mouthed: but he could do no more, he was so weary, that he knew not what he did: and therefore he asks nothing but to be satisfied. And hereupon he says: Give unto me: as if he should say: It is all one unto me, whether I eat brown bread or white, so that I may fill my belly, admit it were but with Acorns, it is all one unto me. A man might here find some color to excuse Esau: and it seems that this might well have been pardoned him. But what? So much the more in this must we behold, that our desires how natural and lawful soever they be, are yet nevertheless to be repressed, when there is any question of the heavenly life: for then we must bring under every consideration, and rather lose life an hundred times, than go out of the path of salvation. It is not enough therefore that men abstain from those acts that are altogether dissolute and wicked, and whereof they may be ashamed, but yet whatever desire they shall

have, yea permitted unto them of God, which is not altogether condemned, yet must they tame them, when there shall be any comparison with spiritual benefits. But hereof we shall yet treat more at large. In the meantime it behooves us to note this point, that Esau sought not after great dainties: he saw the Pottage, whereof mention is here made, and he asks nothing but to be satisfied therewith.

Now Jacob asks of him his birthright in payment. If he had asked it of him through ambition, and that it had not belonged unto him, undoubtedly it had been no bargain: on the other side, the malice which he had, could by no means have been excused: and farther this had been to commit an outrageous and thievish act, so to hold his brother's throat shut up, as to say: if thou wilt not forgo unto me, all that belongs to thee, I will not give thee one morsel to eat, rather thou shalt perish. And to what extremity would this grow?

But Jacob demands nothing of Esau, but that which was before given him. For he was taught that before the two children were born, now already this sentence was pronounced, that God had declared, that it must needs be that the elder must serve the younger. Jacob then, in respect of God possessed already through faith the birthright: It is true that that stood him in no stead in the judgment of the world: but the question is hereof the right title, that he knew that God had appointed him to be the firstborn, and had declared, that the birthright belonged unto him. So then, he robs not Esau of anything that was his, but he rather asks again that which was his own: as if he should have said, Because thou art first come out of the womb, thou despisest the sentence that God hath given, both concerning me and thyself: but yet that must stand which God hath decreed, it cannot be called back again. For myself, I always remain in this hope, that I shall obtain that which was promised unto me: but for thy part, this is to the end that thou shouldst understand that I set more store by

the service of God than by mine own life: and therefore sell me thy birthright.

We see here briefly, that Jacob would not get the good of another by deceit or malice, neither enforce his brother to spoil himself of that blessing which belonged unto him, but he demands, that that which God had given him, might be approved and ratified amongst men. Lo then the sum of that which is spoken here. And therefore they, who will use so great rigor, to get the substance of another, and to enrich themselves with the loss of their neighbors, have not whereof to make them any buckler here: as we shall see very many, who will espy out occasions, that if a poor man, be in any extreme necessity, it must needs be that he be robbed. Lo then they will pray and violently grate upon him. For then they will bargain with him, when they see him in this case, and oh say they (who live upon spoils, as hawks do upon the prey) this man must pass through my hands. Lo then a poor man who shall have but one field or one meadow: if he be indebted or fail to find money to pay, if he come to some Usurer, he will say unto him, lo, there is no remedy I must needs sell you such a piece, oh I have no money (says he) at this time, and yet in the meantime he will keep his money in his purse, watching that occasion, which is as a robbery, for as much as he seeks the means to deceive his neighbor. This is commonly seen, that he that shall be pinched with any misery, he shall be eaten even to the bones, of such as only have the means to succor those that are in necessity.

But if such wicked wretches, (as I have said) will cloak their iniquity in the person of Jacob, it is too vain a thing. For Jacob sucked not another man's good unto himself, nor he sought not to enlarge himself to the end to lessen his brother: but he remained in the possession of that which God had given him. The birthright was his own already, indeed not according to the order of nature, but

because it so pleased God. Inasmuch therefore as he deceived none, did wrong to no man, neither used any rigor or excess to draw another's good unto himself, we must not take any pattern and patronage from hence of those same thieveries and oppressions which commonly are exercised amongst men. And forasmuch as the question is here of a spiritual benefit that Jacob seeks not riches, he seeks not his commodities, nor any earthly honor, to advance himself above his brother: he forsakes all this, this is all one to him: but he would have that which God had promised him: that is, that though he be small in this world, though he be afflicted, tormented and injured, and that men do him many injuries, it is all one unto him, so that this inestimable treasure be reserved unto him: that is to say, that of his race shall come the salvation of the world, and that withal he is made of the company and fellowship of God's children.

Touching Esau his answer, we see already that which the Apostle says, and that which we have also alleged: that he was altogether a profane man. I haste to death, to what purpose (says he) shall my birthright serve me. In saying that he hastes to death, and that his birthright served him to no purpose: we see that he was altogether dull and blockish, and that it was all one to him, so that he might pass this present life.

And lo also what this word, Prophane importeth: for it is contrary to the word Holy. And what meaneth this word Holy? To be holy, is when we are separated and put apart to serve God: For all the world is full of filthiness and iniquity, as Saint Paul saith. And when we shall have our conversation here beneath after the common manner, this is to defile ourselves with all filthiness. But to the end we may be held for the children of God, it behooveth that we be separated even as Saint Paul speaketh thereof, in the first chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. It behooveth that God gather us unto himself. For

if we walk among thorns, that is but to scratch us every minute, if we go through dirt and clay, that is to beray us. It behooveth then that we be separated. But (as I have said) the word Prophane is contrary and opposite unto this. What then must we do? This is it, that a man take good heed to himself: yea, even to his body. For even as there are two parts in us, to wit, the body and the soul: so the spiritual life is, when we know whereunto God hath called us, and whereunto he daily biddeth us: to wit, that we should be heirs of the kingdom of heaven: See what it is to sanctify ourselves, as it is said Purify yourselves, yea all you that bear the Lord's vessels. And Saint Paul alleging this place saith: Having therefore such promises. That is, that God accounteth us for his servants and children: Let us take heed that we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, as well of the body as the soul.

But behold Esau, who hath no care but for his belly, and that he sheweth very well when he saith:

"Behold I haste to death, and what shall this birthright avail me?"

Yea, but it was for everlasting life, it was for a heavenly inheritance: he hath no regard to all this. So then we see, that he did eat as a Dog, or rather as a Hog that had his nose always in the swill trough, and sought for nothing but meat. Behold then the disposition of Esau, which is declared unto us in these words. And so the exhortation of the Apostle ought well to be practiced of us: when he saith, Let us not be profane men as Esau was: For see what is the cause that maketh us to forgo the hope of that salvation that God hath given us: when we are snared in our own sense, and in our carnal desires, it is certain, that we are quite out of taste with that which appertaineth to the salvation of our souls, that hath no savor with us: so that there is

neither word of God, nor promise, nor anything, which we do not lightly esteem, when we are so profane.

Now then, let us take good heed, when we are provoked with some desire to think, "Go to, God hath not placed us in this world, to perish as asses and horses: he hath given us a soul, wherein he hath engraved his own image." So then, it behooves us always to labor and to aspire unto this heavenly immortality, and especially to enforce ourselves to fight against all our affections, and not to be so holden here below, that we strive not always to break and undo these cords that hinder us, that we cannot come directly unto God.

Mark then what we have here to learn. That we be not like unto Esau, saying: "I haste to death and whereunto shall my birthright serve me?" What? shall we do such dishonor unto the dignity and nobility, which God hath placed in us, forasmuch as he hath given us immortal souls: that we say we are not of this world, our place is above, and our right is above, and in the meantime, shall we rest and be entangled here? So then, though we should perish a hundred times, yet let us know that God hath reserved a better life for us, and that there is our sovereign good that we ought to esteem: and albeit that we want and have need of transitory benefits, which only serve to maintain us here beneath, yet let us bear it patiently, and let us always mark, if I die, not to say I perish, or I am utterly lost and cast away: For this is but a passage by death, to go from one life to another. We must therefore look up thither. And this is the sum of what we have to mark here.

But however it be, we see here how God hath laid open the beastliness of Esau, and hath showed that he was already forsaken of him, and was not governed by his holy spirit: as the wisest of the world, albeit it seems they pierce through the clouds, yet are they so

dull and blockish, that they regard nothing but that which is present unto them, and thereto they wholly give themselves. We shall see therefore the wittiest and those whom men so greatly magnify, which look to nothing but to build their houses. Now I say not only to build goodly palaces: but also to get great revenues for their children, to advance themselves, and to become great states, to live at ease, to be feared and honored, and that all the world may be constrained as it were to pass through their hands: and in the meantime: as for God, they do not much remember him, and they are in such sort unthankful, that it were much better to be a hog or an ass, than to be like unto them. And why so? A hog has but his natural appetites: when his belly is full he will sleep, or he will wallow in dung: and he is well contented with it. But men, what desires have they? It is certain that there can be found no greater grief to torment them withal more cruelly than their own appetites. So then for this cause, they are in continual vexation and torment, inasmuch as they respect nothing but this life: and if they once die, why with them as it seems, all is dead. Likewise we see in all the reprobate, that they have not any taste of the Heavenly life. And therefore we must so much the more pray unto God, that he will open our eyes, to the end we may always see beyond these present things, and that we may keep ourselves therein, in such sort, that we be not holden here beneath.

But Jacob contenteth not himself that Esau hath simply sold him his birthright: but he will have an oath. Esau sweareth: this is all one to him: and herein we see how God threw him under his feet. For although hunger oppressed him so hardly that he was constrained to renounce his birthright, yet when he came to swear, and that the name of God was taken to witness, and protested that God should be his judge and punish him if he were forsworn and disobedient, and kept not his promise: when all this was done, and he not ignorant what his birthright was worth, it must needs be said that the devil

had altogether blinded him. But hereby we are admonished that when we have once begun to start away and to turn our backs to God, it must needs be that so much the more we be indurate and hardened, to have no more understanding of God than brute beasts. And when we have after a sort renounced the inheritance of salvation, it shall come to pass that we shall renounce it a hundred and a thousand times, yea the devil will find a hundred means in one day to plunge us in the gulf of perdition, whereout we shall never be able to help ourselves.

Mark then what we have yet to observe upon this place: but by the way we have to consider Jacob's abstinence. Behold an example of true fast, and not as the Papists imagine. It is true, that fasts are commanded unto us in the holy scripture, for divers causes: For they serve to tame our carnal affections: and we must so cut off our drinking and our eating, that the temperance which God requires of us, may be as a continual fast, for the whole time of our life: but yet it is oftentimes required that we should lessen our portion. And why so? To the end we may be the better disposed to prayer. And again, when we are afflicted, there is no question then of banqueting and making great cheer: if God threatens us, and that he will show us some sign of his wrath (as he says by his Prophet:) I then call you to mourning and weeping: and if we loose the reins to our desires, it is as if we should bid him battle and despite him.

Mark then how fasting serves to humble us before God, and to make us as wretched malefactors acknowledging that we have offended him. Moreover, the fast whereof mention is made here, is that which causes a man to abstain, yea from eating and drinking, if the same hinder him from serving God, and which makes him rather to forsake his own life, than to be turned away from God's will. For (as we have already said) Jacob suffered as much as his brother Esau: It

is very true: that he had not traversed and run so far that day in the fields and woods: he had tarried in the house after his accustomed manner: but albeit that he had made ready his dinner: he was an hungered and had an appetite to eat, but howsoever it was, he liked better to abstain, and to captivate himself, and to renounce his dinner, and as it were his own life, than to lose this occasion, which he had, that his birthright might be confirmed unto him.

So then, we have here to make comparison between Jacob and Esau, and to make our profit of the exhortation which we have alleged: that is to say, that we be not profane. But contrariwise it is said of Esau:

"That he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way."

The speech here at the first sight is simple, but it carries much with it: For it was not enough that he had said that Esau, without any further thinking of the matter had emptied his dish and was gone: but Moses says that he did eat and drink, that he took his refection wholly at his ease, and that he was well filled, as though his birthright had been nothing unto him. And this is the conclusion which he sets down.

That he contemned his birthright. But before we come to this, it is said that he did eat, that he drank, and rose up, and went his way: wherein it is showed that Esau was abashed at nothing, but he was as a Dog, that did nothing but shake his ear, after he had eaten and drunk. Then he went his way and pleaded not the matter against his brother, as they which repent themselves, and are better advised, when they have done any unadvised act. They consider, "Alas what have I done? What shall become of me? How far have I overshot myself?" Esau thinks nothing of all this: but he leaves his brother after he was full: he rose up, and had no care of anything. Now therefore we have here to behold how the Devil, when he has taken

possession of a man, makes him so senseless and blockish, that he has no feeling of sorrow in himself, no remorse nor scruple, although he see that he be as it were cut off and banished from the kingdom of God, yet he is no whit moved with it. But this which I have touched ere while is yet better expressed: that is, that always we fall from one evil to another: and when the Devil has gotten us into his snares, he so entangles us in them that we can never wind out.

But we must gather this general doctrine of this history, that is, that we always think upon that which is said by our Lord Jesus Christ: "That first of all we seek for the kingdom of God: and that the rest shall be cast unto us." Now when he speaks of the kingdom of God, this is not only to be understood of life everlasting, but this also is comprised in it. For the kingdom of God is, that God be glorified in us, that he be served and worshipped, that we be his people, as also he has mutually sanctified us: as he has spoken thereof by his Prophet Isaiah: "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts, and he will sanctify you, and will be your strength." When we shall therefore seek that God may be honored, and that we labor to dedicate ourselves to him, and to be, as it were living sacrifices: then shall all other things be given unto us: that is to say (as Saint Paul also has declared:) God will show himself a father as well of our bodies as of our souls. For he says unto Timothy, that if we walk in the fear of God, thinking more upon Heaven than upon the earth: "We have the promises (howsoever it be) of this present life, as well as of the life to come."

It is very true that the promises belonging unto this present life are accessories, that is, no other than that which follows and depends thereupon: but it is so much, that if we lean upon the bounty of God, and strive thither whether he has called us: that is to say, to the salvation which he has so dearly purchased for us, by our Lord Jesus Christ: God will not only become the father of our souls, but also of

our bodies. We are thoroughly assured of this, and ought to be resolved in it. But now (howsoever it be) if we must be ready to renounce this present life, and all the commodities which are here. If we must renounce our own life, by a stronger reason we must renounce to live. Now we cannot live here without eating and drinking: but yet it behooves that we be ready to suffer hunger and thirst, rather than to be turned away from our calling: and not only this, but when the question shall be of death, we must offer our lives to God, doing him this homage, and always desiring rather a precious and blessed death before him, than all the lives that might be imagined in this world, which he shall accursed.

Behold then the rule that is given to all Christians, and whereby they are tried if they be the true children of God: and that is, when the world hinders them not to serve God, but they always march on forwards by that path which is showed them by the holy Scripture. When I say that the world lets them not: I understand not only those wicked lusts as drunkenness, whoredom, covetousness, and such like: but also those desires that are not utterly condemned: as eating and drinking when it shall be permitted us of God, and yet if eating and drinking shall hinder us from serving God, then we must so strive, that our desires may be tamed.

Now this may be better understood by the common experience we have. There is a man who may live in delights and pleasures, he has to eat to the full, yes, of all manner of dainties and delicacies, and exquisite meats: but he must hang his conscience (as they say) upon the rack, or rather be profaned with the wicked world. For there are a great many conditions offered to many, which are as the enticing baits of Satan. Thereupon they will think, "Oh if I were in such a place, I might gather a great deal of good, and afterwards I should be in great honor, all the world would crouch unto me: In the meantime

I should have my table well furnished, I should have wherewith to nourish me to my desire: yes and in my old age, when I should have gathered together my livelihood and rents, I should be assured to live at my ease. But I cannot attain unto it." But what does this tend to? Even hitherto, that I cannot do this, without being in great danger, to bring myself to great wickedness, yes and without utterly estranging myself from God: However it be, I cannot serve God purely as he has commanded me. But if any man be tempted with this, it is certain that he is like unto Esau, if he makes choice of this condition, which shall be more agreeable to the world, and in the meantime shall forsake the means he has to serve God, and to live in the peace and tranquility of a good conscience. For he considers not: "I am a weak man, and have much ado to hold myself in the fear of GOD, although, I am every day exhorted unto it: yes, and though I do give myself wholly unto it, and enforce myself thereto: and what shall become of me when I shall have no word of God, that I shall not be exhorted to do my duty, and that I shall be entangled with many businesses and affairs of the world?" If a man thinks not of all this, and that he makes choice of a good table, that is to say, if he rather chooses an estate whereby he may enrich himself, it is certain that he shall be resembled unto Esau.

Contrariwise, when we shall think: "Go to, it is true that we shall be at our ease, if we will forsake God, or rather depart from him, and will decline, be it never so little from a good way. But what? The devil will by and by find new sleights to bring us wholly to wickedness, in such sort that we shall be as a desperate people." But let us prevent such a danger, and rather let us love hunger and thirst, yes and to feed straitly, and not to have any great pomp and great superfluity: Let us choose rather, I say, not to have so great an estate, and hold ourselves in sobriety, than to be rich and wealthy, and notwithstanding to forget ourselves, and to have all our joy here

beneath. When we shall so behave ourselves herein: lo how we follow the example of our father Jacob. But as I have said already, the question is not only of forsaking our ease and commodity, but also, when need shall be, of our own life. For if so be, we must die to make confession of our faith, such as God requires of us, and to glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and must pass that way: we must likewise also forsake our own life, and all that belongs unto it: and if we do it not, we show that we know not what it is to have tasted of spiritual blessings: but that we have lost all taste of them, forasmuch as the devil has made us drunken with his poisons, and has bewitched us and made us senseless and blockish.

We see here by the way how profitable this history is unto us. For besides that we have said already, that God has ratified his election, and has discovered that which was in Esau and Jacob: here our father Jacob reaches out his hand unto us, and shows us that all the pleasures of this world, ought to be nothing unto us, no not our very nourishment, when there shall be any question: to be as poor starved people, that we rather forsake to eat and drink, when all shall be made ready, yes specially, when the smell shall have provoked us, that we imagine to have the morsels already in our mouths, and to have swallowed them down, when we shall be come so far, nevertheless, that we enter into such a combat against ourselves, that we renounce our natural inclination, and specially that which is not utterly condemned amongst men, if it let us from coming unto God, if it hinder us, or entangle us here beneath in any corruptions. Behold what we ought to do.

And moreover that we take good heed on the other side, that we be not like unto Esau, and that we allege not this, and that as many say, "Oh we must live." We may well have our excuses before men: but when we shall come to render a reckoning before that great Judge,

who has declared unto us, that he will have us to set such price upon the treasure of our salvation, that he has offered us in the Gospel, that we learn to withdraw ourselves from the world, and that all that is in it be nothing in comparison of it. But this thing is practised after sundry sorts and manners: For when a Christian man shall have plenty, if he be sober in eating and drinking, and do not so gorge himself, that he lose both his sense and memory, but be always disposed to praise GOD, to execute the charge whereunto he is called, and to employ himself to that which belongs to his estate and vocation, if a man be so temperate, he is like unto Jacob. For he forsaketh to eat and drink, not because he values not the benefits that God has put into his hand, but he forsaketh them, in bridling his desires, to the end not to exceed measure: and after he always lifteth up himself on high, regarding the service of GOD, and preferring it before any worldly thing.

Again, if it be necessary that he who was rich, should be poor: and that he had rather be poor, yea if it were but to eat roots, if need should be, rather than to be alienated from GOD: and that always he remain steadfast in it, saying, "forasmuch as I am an heir of the world I ought to be well contented: and now if I endure hunger or thirst, if I bear any necessities and miseries, I will pray unto God that he will give me patience." And this is the reason, why Saint Paul also says, that he had learned, in the school of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be hungry and to be full: that is to say, when he had enough, he left not to hold himself in: and when he had nothing he was patient in his necessity: he had recourse to God and chose rather to have many wants in respect of the world then to have wherewith to grow and enrich himself, and yet to be empty of heavenly benefits.

For it is certain that Esau had his soul buried in the pottage he saw there, he smelt them, and thereto he laid his snout. And wherefore?

Because he had no other consideration than of this present life. Lo, his soul which was buried therein. Now we may be compassed round about, with all the goods of this world: but it behooves that the smell does not so allure us, that we esteem not spiritual things far above them, and always to prefer them. Mark then briefly, how we ought to apply this doctrine unto our use.

And moreover, let us mark well that which is spoken here, that the wickedness of Esau was because he made no account of his birthright. And therefore, this is a sign that we condemn the graces of GOD, and as a man would say, cast them to the ground and tread them under our feet when we are so much addicted, either to this life, or to our desires: and when we can endure and bear nothing but will have all which is pleasant unto us after the flesh. When then we will in such sort hold our lusts, it is certain that we make light account of that heavenly inheritance. For how shall that be esteemed of us? It shall be esteemed of us (as I have said already) when the world shall be unto us but as an accessory, and all that is in it shall go as at the tail. But the gospel and the promises which are therein contained, whereby God testifies unto us, how he has adopted us, and likewise how he will have us to himself: this must mount up above them, and we must be ravished in them. And notwithstanding let us well advise ourselves. For if once the Devil gains this of us, that we become beastly in our pleasures, he will not put us in mind for naught, we shall seek after nothing but this transitory life, we shall do nothing but run up and down like poor beasts, and have no mark whereat to aim, as it fell out with Esau. I have said already that these words are not put in in vain. He did eat, he drank, he rose up and went his way. And what a company of such, and such like, do we see at this day? For they who have their delights after the manner of the world, will esteem us for beggarly mopes and they deride our simplicity: Well, well, say they: let them have their Gospel, and

notwithstanding die for hunger, and let them be such as have not a rag to hang on their tail, and have nothing to champ between their teeth, or rather let them droop and hang their wings, and be so miserable as none can be more: and let them rejoice in their Gospel, as much as they will, but we in the meantime will have our swing in this world, we will have all our desires, and our table well garnished.

And above all these contemners of God, which are at this day advanced into states and dignities, it is well known how they flout us, and bleat out their tongue, if men speak unto them of the gospel and it seems to them that we are as mad men, which cannot discern between good and evil. And why so? For they eat and drink they rise up, and go their way: yea the world does so hold them, or rather Satan has in such sort possessed them, that Heaven is nothing unto them, and they altogether forget everlasting life. We see this, and yet it is to no purpose to pursue it: For our Lord has set before our eyes, that this is a horrible condemnation when we fall into such blockishness, to prefer this life, which is nothing but a shadow before that eternity, to which God has called us. For let us put the case, that we should live a hundred years after our death: and yet what is that? If we make comparison (as S. Paul says) with this world, it is but a minute and a figure which passeth away, and in sum, but a moment.

Now contrarywise of what weight ought our immortality to be with us, which is offered unto us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and whereof he hath so well certified us? And yet concerning this life, who is it that can promise us one day? For they who are well fed, they grow therein, and there cannot be a minute to uphold them: and specially intemperance chokes very many. And we see that men, the more they have wherewith to do well, they kill themselves. And yet in the meantime we cannot content ourselves, but (like poor beasts) we must seek for that which has no certainty: and in the turning of a

hand all is lost. We seek nevertheless for this, and hereunto we are given, yea wholly addicted, insomuch that we discern not betwixt that which is permanent and that which flits away. For if we contemn that which is everlasting whither then go we? It is certain that the most wicked themselves will say that this is madness: but after they have said it, they show that they are strayed, and that they do not greatly pass for it.

And this is so common a vice that it behooves that the most perfect especially fight against it. And the Apostle not without cause handling this matter says: "Be not profane," to the end to make us watchful: and to make us think who we are, and that we should not be so brutish as to rest upon this present life. So then, let us go further, and that which is here given us, let us apply for our help, to make us run on the more swiftly: but if there be anything that hinders us, yea though it were our very eye (as our Lord Jesus Christ says) that our eye may rather be plucked out, and we rather desire to enter into the kingdom of Heaven blind, than having all our senses sound to go into everlasting destruction. So then to conclude, let us rather love hunger and thirst than to cram and stuff our bellies, and in the meantime not to regard everlasting life. For we must not be so snared in these corruptible and transitory things that we cannot always lift up our senses and affections on high, to the end, through hope to be citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

But now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses, praying him that it will please him in such sort to make us to feel them, that it may serve to make us there to open them: and that we may learn in such sort to fight against all temptations, that if we must endure many poverties and miseries in this world (howsoever it be), that this do not turn us to wickedness and make us to decline from the right path: but that everyone may

here resist both himself, as also all his desires, and all his passions: and that we may serve our God in such sort, that if it will please him to prove our patience in leaving us destitute of means and of the commodities of this world: that we may bear all with a quiet and peaceable courage, until we be received into this blessed inheritance, where we shall not lack anything whatsoever it be: but there we shall have the fullness of all joy and happiness. That not only etc.

## **The Sixth Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 26.**

1 Now there was a great famine in that land, far greater than that first famine that was in the days of Abraham. Wherefore Isaac went unto Abimelech, the King of the Philistines, into Gerar:

2 For the Lord appearing unto him had said, "Go not down into Egypt, but dwell in the land which I shall tell thee."

3 "Be a stranger in this land, and I will be with thee, and bless thee: For to thee and thy seed, I will give all these countries, that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to Abraham thy father."

4 "I will multiply thy seed that it may be infinite as the stars of Heaven, and I will give unto thy seed all these countries: and all the nations of the Earth shall repute themselves blessed in thy seed."

5 "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and observed my ordinance, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

We saw yesterday how Jacob forsook his meat for that spiritual benefit which God had promised unto him: and hereby it appears that he had more care of his soul than of his body. Here we have an example, though not altogether like in Isaac his father, yet coming very near it. For we see how Isaac had more regard for the spiritual inheritance than for all that concerned this brittle and transitory life. He was oppressed with famine, and there is no doubt, but that it was not his ease to go into Egypt. But when he was let by an express commandment, it was a sign that his courage tended thitherwards: because his commodity likewise drew him. God stayed his journey, and he obeyed. We see then that Isaac left not only a mess of pottage: but he, seeing that he could endure much woe for a year's space, notwithstanding he withheld himself, and sought no refuge in Egypt, and remained in the land of Gerar, which specially could not be altogether exempted from poverty, which was a part of that country. For it is impossible, when there is any famine, but that the neighbor and near places must also feel it. It may easily be gathered that then there was no dearth in Egypt. So that Isaac here shows us that although temptations be great, if we be destitute of that which is necessary to maintain us, that yet notwithstanding we must always hold us to the will of God, and rather forget all our cases, and prepare ourselves patiently to suffer all want and necessity, than to seek our commodities, as it were, against the will of God. This is the first point that we have to mark in this history. Now it is said:

"There was a great famine in the land, a greater than that former that was in the days of Abraham."

For there had been two famines already that Moses rehearsed unto us. As soon as Abraham arrived in the land of Canaan, he was forced to depart, and this was a very hard combat unto him, seeing that God had shown him that land, and that he had conceived great joy, for that he should be put in possession thereof; and now a little after he must be chased out, and become as it were a poor vagabond, and go down into Egypt because he found not any succor elsewhere. The second time he also withdrew himself into the land of the Philistines, which was of the very same country that was promised unto him, and under the King of Gerar, not he of whom now mention is made: for all called him Abimelech, which is as much to say, as "My father the king"; and this was not only an honorable title but also expressed that kings governed not by tyranny, and did devour up their subjects, but had a fatherly care over them whom God had committed to their charge. When then it is said that this famine came as the other, this is to show unto us that altogether like as God had proved the faith of Abraham and his constancy, so likewise he would call his son to the like trial. For as Isaac was heir of the promise, so also must it needs be that he succeed his father in that which was promised to the children of God: For we must show by the effect that we so esteem heavenly benefits, to which God has called us, that we pass through the world, and that we fail not, however we be afflicted after diverse and sundry manners.

Mark then whereto Moses has regard when he compares these two famines: that is, to show us that when Abraham was tempted, it was not only for his own cause: but his son also must be like him. But by the way we are called the sons of Abraham and of Isaac: it behooves then that our faith be examined, as it shall seem good unto God. It is very true that we shall be more confounded, and that is because we have not received so great a measure of strength. Mark therefore the

cause why God supports our infirmity: but yet this is not to the end that our faith should be idle. So then, we are here warned by the spirit of God, that being in this world, we must be subject to many miseries, and that we shall not have an earthly paradise to the end to have all our desires, and to be so satisfied that we shall lack nothing: but that it shall oftentimes seem that God has forgotten us, that he has taken the bread out of our hand, and that we shall be in such a case as if he had condemned us to perish. When this shall come to pass, let us not think it strange, and likewise let us not be as young novices: but let every one of us think beforehand of that which may come upon us, and be prepared to suffer all things patiently. The promise is well given unto the faithful: although the lions oftentimes seek their prey and find it not, and that they roar out for hunger, yet nothing shall be wanting to the Children of God. Mark then how he has spoken thereof in the thirty-fourth Psalm.

And again in another place: "All they which fear God, shall be satisfied with all good things." But this is not therefore spoken as though God would fatten up his own, and give them whatever they shall desire: but he nourishes them after another manner. And when he speaks of satisfying them, this means not that he will always fill their bellies with exquisite meats: but we must yet have recourse to another place of the Psalm: "That the poor of the Church shall be nourished." Mark here a certain kind of contrariety, when God says that he will fill those of his church with bread, and notwithstanding, calls them poor and needy. If they be poor and needy, where is this promise that God will fill them with bread and with all good things? But we must reconcile that which seems to disagree, and in such sort that we always depend upon the providence of God, to be as it were fed by him: In the meantime if he shall suffer that we endure hunger and thirst, that we do not therefore give over to hope that he will be

our good father to nourish us. And this is the cause why we do pray for our daily bread.

Now this opposes itself against all those provisions wherein the children of the world do put their trust: for they are never stayed unless their barns and cellars be full, as it is said in another Psalm. And besides when they are well-fraughted, they despise God as though they were without all danger as they think. But contrariwise, however the faithful have wherewith to nourish themselves, yet must they every day open their mouth as if God should put in bread by morsels: and when they have nothing, yet always they trust in him and in his goodness, and hope that he can sustain them with one crumb of bread, when it shall so please him: or rather, albeit they see no way how it should come, yet nevertheless, that God will find a means to maintain them.

When therefore it is said that Isaac was driven out through famine, this is as much as if God would declare unto us, that when we shall fall into poverty and need, that we think not that we are therefore forsaken of him, nor take it as a sign that he hates us: or rather that we imagine not that he thinks no more of us: but that as our father Isaac endured hunger and thirst constantly, and in the end tried that God always had care of him, so we also acknowledge the like. Mark this for one special lesson. And this is that also which is showed unto us by Saint Paul in the 8th chapter to the Romans when he says: "Shall hunger be able to separate us from the love that God bears us in Christ Jesus our Lord." Saint Paul fights there, in the name of all the faithful, showing therein that if God should cut off our morsels, yea and that we should be deprived of all nourishment, as if it seemed that he would exclude us from all the benefits that he has created in the world, as though we were not worthy to be upon the earth: yet must we overcome this temptation there, and conclude,

though it be in the midst of famine, that God will be our father, and we must content ourselves with this, rejoicing in our afflictions. But in the meantime we are also exhorted by the example of Isaac, not to be so grieved and vexed with famine, nor for other afflictions of what sort soever they be, to the end they make us to forsake God, or turn us out of the path wherein he has set us. For as we have seen Jacob forsook his meat, to aspire to that spiritual inheritance, which had been promised unto him: So now likewise we see that Isaac had no regard to that which he might suffer in that length of time. He saw Egypt which was a good refuge, nevertheless he was turned from it. And why so? Because God had forbidden him to go thither. So then, when we see that Isaac was not overcome by famine, that he obeyed God and forsook not to be guided by his hand: by this we have also to learn, when our Lord will afflict us with poverty and need, that we look not to unlawful means to relieve our necessity. And above all, if Satan lay before us his baits to entice us, that we rather choose to die of hunger (if need be) than to withdraw ourselves from the conduction of God: seeing that we cannot be nourished but by his blessings. For when we shall have all the bread and meats in the world, it is certain that the wind shall as well profit us for our nourishment as these, and we shall think that we grow, and yet in the meantime we shall not be substantially fed: For it is not bread (as it is said in Moses) that nourisheth us, but every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Now by this word, he doth not understand the doctrine of salvation, but that same virtue which God has spread over all his creatures. Mark then what it is that nourisheth us: I say not only in respect of the soul but also in respect of this transitory life. Which seeing it is so, let us take heed that we be not fed by that which the devil shall set before us when we are in necessity: and canst thou do this, and art thou able to wind out from thence, and hast thou any such help? Yea

if this be contrary to the will of God, that we always remain steadfast, and that we wait till God shall show himself pitiful towards us: as he that best knows the means, although it be unknown unto us. It is true that we shall have no such revelations as our father Isaac had, God will not appear unto us from heaven: but this ought to suffice us, that at this day the will of God is certain unto us: for God has supplied that which was wanting to our old fathers when he appeared unto them: at this day we have the law, which is an infallible rule unto us: we have the prophets which are expositors thereof unto us, to the end that the shortness thereof be not obscure unto us: we have furthermore perfection in the gospel.

Seeing God then has revealed unto us that which is profitable for us to know, we must not desire visions at this day, but as often as we shall be in any perplexity or doubt, we must have recourse unto the Scriptures: and when we shall think upon the means, let us mark whether the same be permitted unto us, and whether God allows of them. And when we shall find that the means which shall come into our heads are not agreeable to the will of God, according as it is contained in the law and in the Gospel, that we then forsake all. Mark how we have to follow our father Isaac, yea to overcome this temptation which is very heavy and troublesome: that is to say, when we have nothing wherewith to be nourished and fed but a very small pittance. For oftentimes the unbelievers are found to have thirty times more than is necessary for them; likewise a man shall find prodigal and dissolute persons that will waste and spend all the benefits of God: yea, and they will make havoc of them. But what of the poor faithful ones? Having toiled to maintain their life, yet scarcely do they find in the end how to get their bread.

When therefore we see that God will oftentimes thus prove those that are His, let every one prepare himself thereto, and let us not be

abashed, although our Lord does handle us with such rigour and severity. Nevertheless, this is not to defeat us of that which He has promised us, or not to hold us for His children: and let us acknowledge that the office of feeding and nourishing us appertains unto Him, and that He will do it, although not according to our desires and fantasies. And moreover, when we see that God does not press us that hunger should drive us, as they say, from door to door, let us know that He bears so much with us by reason of our weakness. This is the sum of what we have to learn concerning the example of Isaac. But here a question might be asked. Why does God permit our father Abraham to go into Egypt, and forbid his son Isaac? But concerning this, we have to note that God knows who we are, what our strength is, and according to this also He suffers us not to be tempted above our strength (as Saint Paul has spoken), calling him faithful in this behalf. God then knows that which He has put into us, for that which is there of nature shall always be to throw us down: but when He has given unto us any power of His Holy Spirit, He knows whether it be in little or in great portion, and according to this also He exercises our faith and our patience; and when He sees that we are weak, He suffers us not to be tempted so strongly. Mark then how this came to pass: and this diversity which is here put between Abraham and Isaac is to show that the faithful shall not always be alike handled of God, for this reason that I have alleged. Isaac was the successor of Abraham, he had the promise: and in this that he was tried and examined by divers afflictions, it is evidently seen that God made him to pass by one and the self-same path: but notwithstanding (as I have already said) it follows not that he had one and the like rule in all points. For our Lord supports whom He will, and when He suffers men to be more hardly treated, by and by He likewise fortifies and strengthens them.

Abraham forsook not to return to the country of Canaan after he had dwelt in Egypt: but God also drew him out of Egypt, as if He had held him by the hand. For he might long time have remained there, seeing himself rich there: but he might have been hated of the inhabitants: and therefore God draws him from thence. He might likewise have done the like to Isaac, but we must not set Him a law. If any man replies here, could not God have given as well an invincible constancy to Isaac, that he should not have slept there, and could He not have made as well him to have returned? Yes, very well: but can we bind Him to that? It behooves that He govern us according to His infinite wisdom, and not according to our foolish dreams and fantasies. Let us mark well then, that when there is such a diversity in the temptations of the faithful, it is because God knows what everyone will be able to bear. And always let us have recourse to this sentence of Saint Paul: that we hope in Him, if He examines us, if He places us in the battle, if He tries us with many griefs, that notwithstanding He will provide for this, that we shall not be altogether overcome or vanquished. Mark wherefore it was forbidden Isaac to go into Egypt. Now it is said unto him.

That he should dwell in the country of Canaan, and that God will always be with him, and that he will fulfill the oath which he had sworn unto his father Abraham. This is to say, that he would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Here we see why God suffered not Isaac to go into Egypt: that is, that he might not forget the promise which had been given unto him concerning the land of Canaan, and likewise that he should content himself therein, and altogether rest himself there. Now if Isaac, who was so excellent in the faith as we see by all his life, and to whom the Holy Ghost has given such a testimony, had such need nevertheless to be so bridled, what shall become of us? Even so, we ought not to marvel if our Lord does

oftentimes hold us as it were chained in, and that he gives us not license to rove here and there: for he knows that this shall be to cast us to utter confusion. So inasmuch as we have so slippery a memory, insomuch as there needeth nothing to cause us to stray, so as we know no more which shall be our right way: this is the cause why our Lord gives us not so great liberty as we would. And likewise as often as we are holden within straighter bounds than our fantasy desires, let us know that if our Father Isaac had such need thereof, we by greater reason, who are come nothing so near to such excellence of virtue as he, have greater need. Now in the meantime, we see that in Isaac, which erewhile was declared to be in Abraham. God says unto him, that he will give him all those countries that he saw, and through which he walked: yea, but notwithstanding he says unto him: You shall dwell there as a stranger. Mark two things, which yet seem contrary. For if God will give him that land for a possession, Why does he not hasten it? Why does he suffer him so to languish?

But there is no question of that which is past, but of that which was to come. You shall dwell there: yea and the word which Moses uses, signifies to dwell as it were in a strange country, as one that were still going. Lo, Isaac then who had a Lordship upon the earth: and yet had not one foot thereof, but must remain there by leave, and must be subject to many troubles and trials, which were bent towards him: and yet he had not one foot of land, unless it were the burying place whereof mention is made before. To be short, we have to gather here, that God would have Isaac wholly to rest upon his word: as likewise it is the foundation, whereupon we must build all the days of our life, yea and in death too. For if we should have all that we desire, what should we need any more faith or hope? It behooves therefore that the benefits which we wait for from God, that they be hidden from us, and notwithstanding that we behold them only by faith, and that we do God this honour, to account him sure in all that he has spoken:

although he show us not the effect and truth of his promises, which we apprehend not after our reason and carnal feeling: notwithstanding we must say, it suffices us that he has spoken it, he will perform it: When therefore we can fetch all our contentment from the word of God only, then let us assure ourselves of a right trial of all that which we profess, that we believe in him: but if we will always have a gauge, and have all that we desire, it is certain that the word of God shall not be esteemed of us, and we cannot exercise ourselves sufficiently enough in this meditation.

And therefore as often as we see God to have spoken to his servants, and not to have showed them the accomplishment & execution of his word, let us know that this is rehearsed unto us, to the end that we should learn to call upon God, when he shall leave us in suspense, yea and that we shall faint, and be stripped of that which should have been in our hand: that we learn to say: O Lord, since we have thy promise, we shall not be frustrated in waiting for it. When God promises Isaac to be with him, and that he will give him the rest, this likewise is to show us, that the principal of all benefits that we can desire, is that God have care over us, and that he think of our necessities, and that we find him at hand when we call upon him. For unless that we have him merciful unto us, although he give us in all fullness and abundance, that we ask of him, yet it should be nothing: but we must begin at this point: that is to say, we must be well persuaded that God loves us, and that he is favourable unto us. When we have attained to this—to resolve ourselves, that God will always be merciful unto us, and ready to succour us when need shall require, that he will never forsake us—then shall we easily wait for the rest: but if we know not that he is with us: that is to say, that he will make us feel his presence, and in feeling it, will withdraw us from those dangers wherein we are, and in withdrawing us, will lift us up when we shall be fallen, will lead us there, where as there is no path, and

will there give us an issue and way to escape, where there is nothing else but confusion: If we have not (I say) attained to this, there is no true foundation: but if we have once obtained it, we must stay thereupon and hope for the rest. For if God love us it is certain that he has wherewith to succour and help us in all, and through all, and he will do it. And this is the cause why Moses begins at this point.

"I will be with thee."

And afterwards he says: That he will multiply his seed, that he will bless us, and that his seed shall be as the stars of Heaven. It is true, that the benefits which God will bestow upon us, they shall not always fall out to our desires, as we have declared. For oftentimes we shall want them, to the end, we may be the more eager to pray: and also he will try us, and show us that we have no such confidence in him as we ought: and our unthankfulness many times deprives us of that, that GOD otherwise was ready to bestow upon us: For we are not always capable to receive that which he offers unto us. He has an open hand, but we have a close mouth: that is to say, we are shut up in unbelief and distrust. And therefore see the cause why we must so oftentimes wait: but so much there is, that if we be resolved in this point, he is with us, and we are blessed of him in that which he knows to be expedient for us, and we shall lack nothing.

Touching this promise: That all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Isaac's seed, this was special to him, as it was to Abraham: and this respects our Lord Jesus Christ, as it has been expounded. For it was necessary that Jesus Christ should be the fountain of this blessing, the which should flow upon all the lineage of Abraham. It is true that the faithful who descended of him, were blessed and partakers of this promise: but this was by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, if he had been separated from the seed of

Abraham, it is certain that he had been barren and dry, and that he should not have had one drop of the blessing. But at this day, forasmuch as God would by his infinite goodness, that his only begotten son should belong unto us, we were joined to the true natural Children of Abraham: and however we were of the nations of the earth, who were then strayed from the Church of God, and who were altogether departed far from it, yet at this day we are blessed as well as they. For if it were said to him I will bless thy seed, and that God had added nothing, this had at this day been a very slender comfort unto us: But when he says: That all the nations of the earth should be blessed in the seed of Abraham, we are of that number.

Mark then, wherein we have specially to rejoice, knowing that after our Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto us, this promise is to be applied unto us. It is true, that it is oftentimes said in the holy scripture, that men shall be blessed by men, as for example, when they shall set him before them for a pattern and example: and that men will say, desiring to be blessed, "O that God would do unto me as he hath done unto this man here, or unto that man there": but the interpretation of S. Paul shows us, that that which was as well spoken to Abraham as to Isaac, was not only to be understood in that sense: but it is said elsewhere, that the faithful shall be blessed in God. So it is said now, that they shall be blessed in the seed of Abraham. But we have to search all our good and salvation in him alone, who is the fountain thereof, as it is said in the 36th Psalm. But because there is so great distance, and that we cannot soar up so high, our Saviour Christ hath approached near unto us, and we have the living waters in him: there wants nothing, but that we come to drink, as he says: "Come unto me: and whosoever thirsteth, let him come unto me. For I have the living waters, and whosoever shall drink thereof, he shall not only have to quench his thirst, but also living waters shall flow

out of his belly, yea, and fountains of living waters, that he may give thereof unto others."

When therefore we see that God will familiarly communicate with us all his benefits, in the person of his only begotten Son, so much the less excuse is there, if we come not to receive part of this blessing the which is propounded unto us. Moreover, it is not only said that all nations of the earth shall be blessed, but it is said, they are blessed: not for that we can compass or attain to this blessing of ourselves, or by our own power and diligence: but it behooves that every one be blessed in Jesus Christ through faith. For altogether like as he is presented unto us by the gospel, so likewise we must accept him: and if we remain unbelievers, this is because we shut the door as it were, against all his graces. Then seeing it is so, that God has prepared all so long time before, that belongs to our salvation, and that in the fullness of time (as Saint Paul calls it) Jesus Christ has appeared, and has sufficiently witnessed, that he was that blessed seed, wherein we must seek all benefits: Let us likewise come with the like readiness of faith, and with such zeal, that we be not shut out through our own malice and unbelief, to the end God accomplish not that in us which is here pronounced, that we go not to him to have the ratification of his promise: let us, I say, take heed, that none hinder himself through his own fault and vice. Finally it is said:

"That God will ratify his oath with Isaac, forasmuch as Abraham had obeyed the voice of God, and had kept his observations, commandments, statutes & laws."

Here the oath is yet reiterated, for the greater and more sure confirmation of us all: For we cannot give any faith unto God, unless we have stoutly fought against distrust, to which we are so naturally inclined: and forasmuch as we are yet so fickle as is pitiful. For this

cause God swears so much the more to assure us. But it is true (as has been showed before) that this is worthy of great blame in us, that we should constrain God to swear. For we do not honour a mortal man, if we content not ourselves with the simple word that he shall speak, if we count him not for an honest man, contenting ourselves in that he shall have promised us: but when we say, "I will that you swear unto me herein." Behold this is a great sign of distrust, and will not be well borne amongst men. But if we shall notwithstanding do that dishonour to God, to require an oath of him besides his word, must it not needs be, that we be too too villainous? But if so be that God nevertheless do in this behalf take pity upon us, although it be an intolerable vice, that we would have him swear, farther than he has pronounced: yet herein he does apply himself unto us. What can we demand more?

And now, what excuse shall there be, when we would yet that his promises should be assured unto us by an oath? This word then of an oath ought to pierce us to the very heart, as often as it offers itself before us, yea and when there is any question of certifying us of the goodwill of GOD, and of that singular love which he bears unto us. But let us come to that point where he says:

"That this was forasmuch as Abraham obeyed the voice of God."

It should seem here that GOD attributed the accomplishment of his promises to Abraham's virtue, and to his merits: but we have declared already that this could not be, neither ought so to be understood, as though the obedience which Abraham yielded to God had been the cause why God should be bound unto him to perform that he had spoken: For we have showed already that this was altogether free in God. When Abraham was drawn out of the idolatry

wherein he was (as it is declared by Joshua:) What was it that moved him to do it?

Afterwards, when he kept Abraham to the end, this was not because he obeyed him: For, contrariwise, he had said unto him long before, "I will bless thee, I will be with thee, I will be thy large recompense: Thy seed shall be multiplied as the stars of heaven, and in it all nations of the Earth shall be blessed." All this was spoken to Abraham before Isaac was born: and when Abraham would have sacrificed his son Isaac, it was said unto him: "Because thou hast not spared thy only Son, but wast ready to sacrifice him for the love of me, behold I will bless thee," and this was spoken to him long before. We see then, that that which is free in God, and that which he gives us of his mere liberality, he attributes to the service which we do unto him: not to minister unto us any matter of pride, but this is only so much the more to provoke and stir us up with cheerfulness and courage to serve him. Mark then the purpose of God: It is not to the end to rob himself of the praise which is due unto him, to the end men should usurp it: but it is because he knew that they have need of spurs, and must have aids, and helps to serve him, for otherwise we should be cold and dull. They, therefore, which seek here for merits, and would darken the mere praise of God's goodness to exalt men, as though they were the cause of their own salvation, it is certain they would overthrow all, yea and overturn the purpose of God as much as lies in them.

Likewise, let us learn that when it is said, that God will establish his covenant with Isaac, because Abraham had obeyed his voice, that it was not to note the cause why: but it was only to show that the service which Abraham yielded unto him was acceptable to him, to the end that Isaac should follow him and conform himself thereto. Hereby, therefore, we have to stir up ourselves, as often as we feel

any slowness in ourselves, and when we shall not be so disposed as were requisite, to give ourselves fully to the obedience of God: and that we think, "What? It is said that when we shall obey him, he will accept this as a sacrifice of sweet smelling savour: and yet notwithstanding all that we do is nothing, there is no strength in us: nevertheless if God will honour us so, without any worthiness of ours, must we therefore be sluggish, and not thoroughly employ all our powers to his service, especially according to that grace which he shall have given us, and according to our strength? And yet without all indenting or covenanting with him?

Mark then how the faithful ought to be provoked: and that this also is to teach us always to continue, to walk on in fear and carefulness, when our Lord shows us that those whom he has called, oftentimes make and show themselves unworthy of their calling. To the end, therefore, that we do not tempt him, and that we may be ready to receive that which he teaches us, mark wherefore it is said that he rewards our services: not because we merit any reward. For (as I have already said) we must not here reason of that which we can do: For we can do nothing at all: and especially that which we have done by the grace of God deserves no reward: For God can justly condemn it. But the question is, that God accepts that which we do of his mere liberality, to the end to make us more courageous. And everyone ought to apply this to his profit, when we feel that we are slow to do well through our negligence and sloth. Lo then briefly what we have to learn here.

Now when it is said that Abraham obeyed the voice of God: this is to show us the true rule how to live well, to the end that everyone frame not unto himself devotions apart, as we are accustomed to do: For when men will serve God, what do they? They take liberty to live after their own device, and they condemn whatsoever God

commands. What is that, that men may call the service of God in the papacy? That which men have devised of their own foolish brain. For when men shall have diligently gathered all their jugglings together, which they play there, if it be said that God be well served and honored, and yet they do nothing of all that God has commanded, and that they do despise him: It falls out thereupon, even as he himself complains thereof: to wit, that men for their traditions reject that which was ordained for them.

Seeing then, that so it is that we are so inclined to set out our own foolish imaginations, let us learn that when the holy Scripture speaks unto us of living well and holily, when it speaks of the perfection which GOD allows, that is to obey his voice: as also he shows us by his Prophet, "Have I demanded you to offer me any sacrifice?"

Now it is very certain that GOD had required it? And why then does Jeremiah speak thus? It is to show us that God rests not there. Where then? That we obey his voice says he. Mark then the principal, and where we must begin, and which also is the end, whereto we must strive and contend: that is to say, that God has authority to rule us, and that we be his subjects. But notwithstanding we shall find it strange, that is here spoken, that Abraham kept the Commandments, Statutes, Ordinances, and Laws of the Lord. And yet he had not so much as one word of all the Law in writing. For we know how long a time there was between the calling of Abraham and the law: to wit, four hundred and thirty years. How is it then that God now says, that Abraham kept his Commandments, statutes, ordinances and laws? This is, as we have seen before in the 18th Chapter: for albeit he had yet nothing written, yet notwithstanding Abraham was not ignorant of that which God should afterwards teach his people. For he had two manners of ways to govern his people: but yet this was not for that in respect of himself he was changeable. God therefore had not always

one and the same way to teach the faithful: but howsoever it was, yet the rule was one, whether it were written, or inspired to them, whom he reserved to himself.

So, however, Abraham had not yet the Law written, yet he had sufficient instruction, to know how he ought to serve GOD. This, therefore, is what we ought to learn from this place.

But however it be, GOD in the meantime, shows that if we be ready to obey him, and to be subject unto him, that on his part he will never fail us to show us the way wherein we ought to walk, and walking therein we shall not be deceived. But if before there were ever any scripture, Abraham had statutes, commandments, laws, and ordinances: at this day by a stronger reason, when God has declared himself so familiarly by Moses, to whom he has further joined the Prophets, to the end they might there have a more easy understanding of the law, and seeing he has spoken in the Gospel so clearly, shall we doubt that he does not the office of a good master, to show us all that is good, right, and just? But what? The ingratitude of the world is such, that it will not be subject nor brought into order under him: and this is as much as if men would be more wise than is permitted unto them, and would have a wisdom by themselves, as though it had never been said: "To God who is only wise, be honour and glory." When S. Paul says that God is only wise, this was not only for him, but this was to the end that we should search for all wisdom in him. For when we will not accept this for the only rule which he has given us, this is as if we should say, God knew not all that was necessary for us, it must needs be that we invent of our own brain yet somewhat more: and say this will be better. And what blasphemy is this? O when we serve God after this sort, it is as a man would say to spit in God's face. So then let us note that when Moses after he had spoken of the voice of God, adds his commandments, his statutes,

and his ordinances, it is to show us that God will not in any point fail all those who shall be his disciples, and shall come to be ordered by him, to hearken to his voice. And indeed this is not only in this place, no nor in that we come to allege: but as it were throughout all, where our Lord recommends his law unto us, and shows us that it contains all that is necessary to lead men rightly the way to salvation. And thus much concerning the words that are touched in this place. So then, when we will walk as it becomes us, let us mark that there is but one only Judge, to whom we have to render account. But what is it that this Judge demands? Not that everyone should be driven by his own fantasy, or that our good devotions should be put in the place of his word: but that we should hearken unto the voice of our God, and then that we should be apt to learn, to bring us in order under him: and instead that men imagine, that they have done wonders to bind God unto them, by their virtues and merits, that we content ourselves to be approved before him and his Angels, although the world be not contented therewith.

But now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, acknowledging our faults, praying Him that it will please Him to touch us to the quick, that we may more and more be brought both to repentance and to humility, continually to lament before Him, and to pray Him, that it will please Him to cleanse us from all our vices, and to make us to walk in such integrity, that our life may be fully framed to His righteousness, and that by this means, His name may be glorified: when He shall have all the rule over us, and that we shall walk according as He has taught us by His word, without adding anything thereto of our own: and that He will in such sort support us in our weaknesses, that we cease not always to continue in His holy vocation, albeit we go not on so swiftly, and run not with such zeal and fervency as we ought: and that in the meantime we may be armed (however it falls out) with His power, to fight against all

temptations, and never to decline out of the good way, albeit we have many occasions thereto. And that He may not only show us this favor, but also to all peoples and nations of the Earth, etc.

## **The Seventh Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 26.**

6 Isaac therefore dwelt in Gerar.

7 And when the men of that place asked him concerning his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he feared to say, "She is my wife," lest, he said, "the men of this place kill me for Rebecca, because she was fair."

8 Now it came to pass when he had remained there many days, that Abimelech the king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and as he looked, behold, Isaac played with Rebecca his wife.

9 Wherefore Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Surely, behold, she is thy wife; how then saidst thou, 'She is my sister'?" To whom Isaac said, "Because I said, 'I must take heed lest I die for her.'"

10 Then said Abimelech, "What is this that thou hast done unto us? It was not far off that one of this people had not lain by her, so thou haddest brought sin upon us."

We have seen the temptation which happened to Isaac when he was so pressed with famine that it forced him to forsake the place of his habitation. For at the very least, God should have nourished and fed him in that country which he had assigned to him for an inheritance. But even if he would not fulfill his promise to him, should he not have given him some little taste thereof? But now when famine drove him away, it seemed as if God had forsaken him there, and as though he had no more care of him. Isaac therefore had a great struggle to endure here, seeing he was, as it were, destitute of God's favor, which is common to all. For if he nourishes the contemners of his majesty and the wickedest of the world, making his sun shine upon them and causing the earth to bring forth fruit for their nourishment, what should he do for those whom he has taken into his custody and adopted as his children?

But yet see a greater temptation: seeing Isaac was forbidden to go into Egypt, and that God had shown him a certain place of rest, and would that he should dwell there until he might return, and that the dearth were passed. When God then had led him thither, as if to say, "Behold a corner to rest in, which I do assign thee," and there farther, that he feared lest he should be killed for his wife's sake, and after that he was taken and reprov'd: mark further these tokens of the wrath of God upon him, in such a sort that he could not be but in a horrible perplexity.

Now it is very true that he was wonderfully weak, as we shall see hereafter, but however it was, the issue shows that God was not forgetful of him. And this is sufficient. For he will, for a time, keep himself secret in such a way that the poor faithful ones shall be, as it were, lost. But this is enough, that after he has humbled them, after he has discovered their infirmities, he shows himself altogether to make them feel, as it were by effect, that all this while that it seemed

to them that they were quite abandoned from him, he yet in pity looked upon them. Mark then how it came to pass with Isaac.

Now in the first place, it is said that instead of confessing that Rebecca was his wife, he said she was his sister. We saw the like in Abraham. But this is marvelous, that Isaac had not learned this lesson by the experience that was given to his father and mother, for they were both chastised for their over-great fear. And Isaac could not be ignorant of it. There is no doubt but his father had such care, as we have seen, to teach his family, that he had instructed his son herein: "Take heed to thyself, for I have been tossed to and fro all my life long; the like may happen unto thee. For God has yet set me four hundred years before we enter into the possession of that country; it must needs be that thou go from one side to another. But I distrusted the protection of my God, and I have received my payment for it. Yea, I was chastised for it by a profane king that had no fear of God. A poor, blind wretch reproved me of my fault, and God made both me and thy mother ashamed thereof when we were so corrected there. Therefore, fortify thyself." There is no doubt but that Isaac had received such instruction. But when he came to receive the blows, he had lost all and was devoid both of reason and counsel, and there is no doubt but he had some distrust in him. For faith will always minister unto us an invincible constancy, to attempt nothing but that which God allows.

Mark wherein we may know whether we are well grounded in God and stayed upon his promises: that is, when we shall be in any trouble, in any perplexity, and in any danger, if we walk on always in the path which God has commanded us and do not decline therefrom, then he will guide us in all our ways. If then we have this courage, only to repose ourselves upon God and to hope that he will help us, then see an undoubted trial and proof of our faith. But if we

decline either on the one side or on the other, it is very certain that our infidelity betrays itself, and that we show (not having any victory against temptations) that we are not sufficiently stayed and that we have (as a man would say) our straggling thoughts. For we see that Isaac fell to a very unlawful thing when, to save his life, he cloaked the truth as we have seen.

This, therefore, is a token that he had no perfect faith but that he had some mistrust mingled with it. But in this he is not to be excused; and yet, nevertheless, he was a mirror of all holiness. So then we have all good occasion to hang down our eyes and to know that when we imagine that we have well profited in God's school, yet we shall be far off from our mark. And indeed, it shall be a very easy matter unto us when we are far off from all combats to be the valiantest in the world; but when they shall approach to buckle with us, then we hold us all afraid. Thus then let us know that there is not one that has not need to pray daily that God will increase his faith, correcting the remnant of his unbelief. Mark this for one lesson.

Now, upon this, we have one good advertisement; and that is, that when any danger befalls us or that we fear to fall into any evil, that this is as it were a cloud to dazzle our eyes in such a sort that we know not what will become of us, we have no certain counsel, and the wisest are overtaken therein. Let us not presume to be subtle and sharp and to have such promptitude to esteem that we shall always be strong and mighty, that we shall have light hearts, and shall find remedies in our brain when any trouble shall come upon us. Let us keep ourselves from such arrogance; but let us rather acknowledge that God has in himself the spirit of wisdom and of counsel, and let us run unto him. And when we shall be as it were oppressed and that we cannot at the first resolve ourselves, let us not be as those that always forge and coin new discourses; but let us go unto God and

pray him to shine unto us in the midst of darkness. Yea, and especially let us wait that we be not altogether pressed down; but let us acknowledge the ignorance that is in us. And forasmuch as we have not by a great deal so much steadiness as were requisite, let us both morning and evening pray unto God that he will guide us and show us what we have to do. Mark then that which we have to learn by the example of Isaac.

But here a question might be asked whether he committed so great a fault, seeing he lied not: for we have seen before that Rebecca was his cousin. He might then say she is my sister, for the word in that language imports as much as of my blood or kindred. There is no question here neither of the first nor second degree. So Isaac lied not in saying that Rebecca was his sister. And yet notwithstanding all this, he faulted; yea, indeed, for God is no sophist and does not stay upon a word, as we have declared before, but he regards the intent.

When, therefore, we shall have well painted our words, and that there shall be some goodly color and fair show to acquit us before men, all this is nothing: for God sounds the heart. And though men can find nothing to say against our excuses, yet this proves not that God is content therewith. And this which is here is a very good and profitable admonition.

For how do men commonly jest with God? It is true that we will confess that it belongs to him to search into our secret thoughts, and that nothing is hidden from him; but yet so it is that we deal with him after the manner of men; and which is worse, we will altogether go beyond him, and we will blear his eyes; and we will jest more boldly with him than with men. For although we have many starting holes, which might discharge us of blame, yet so much there is that

we have some remorse, knowing other men will not judge so thereof; this man is no beast, he may know my craft.

When, therefore, we have thus disguised our words, yet we shall be always in doubt whether men be satisfied or not. But when the matter is of God, we do nothing but writhe our mouth, or rather mow and snuff at God; for we are as brute beasts, yea and worse too in this point. But so much the more ought we to learn this doctrine: that is to say, that God cares not for all our goodly colors; for they are nothing else but breeches of leaves, and this excuses not our father Adam, that he came not out to make his account. What must we then do? We must so acknowledge our faults in simplicity that we be first our own judges; and when we shall once have found out that there was some crooked and indirect dealing, we must acknowledge that it displeased God.

For mark Isaac's intention: it was to hide his marriage. It is true that the words which he uses are not such as for which he should be called a liar, but yet for all that, there was some lying in him. And why so? Because he would not confess his marriage but would that it should be unknown, and that men should not think that Rebecca was his wife. Mark then in sum the thing we have to learn: that is, that whatever words we have in our mouth, nothing can justify us unless our affection be pure and right, and that we go not in any bypaths, to stray here and there. And when Saint Paul condemns lying, he adds that everyone speak in truth to his neighbors.

When we shall have proceeded thus far herein, see how we shall be held and reputed true before God. But if there be any sleights or crafts, and that we endeavor to speak so that it cannot be understood what we say, and that it be so wrested and turned, as if our tongue

were double, in this, we are already condemned for liars. This then in sum is that which we have to learn upon this point.

Now when it is said, "That Isaac feared lest he should have been killed for his wife's sake," there is no doubt but that he might thereby also have taken occasion, seeing (as Abraham his father alleged) that there was no fear of God in the country: not for that there was so outrageous impiety that neither good nor evil was known there. For we see how the King of the Country spoke; but forasmuch as the true religion ruled not there, and because there was nothing but idolatry, it seemed rather to Isaac that all was confused.

For indeed we shall never have a sure rule to walk in equity and right unless we have the majesty of God present, and that we be held in with that, as it were a bridle. Now when we know not what God is, and that we have nothing but confused speculations, albeit that we have some honesty, and though we have the discerning of good and evil, and that we are not given to hurt, nor to commit wrong and violence, yet so it is that there is no steadiness in us.

For (as I have said) we cannot build upon any other foundation to have a firm and stable building but upon the fear of God going before. Isaac, therefore, might have some occasion to fear and to prevent danger; but in the meanwhile, he ought to have known of what force God his safeguard was, even such as it had been before by experience declared unto him: for if he had been well advised, he would not but have understood that God had his arm stretched out for to have succored him, and that in an invisible manner: for he had said unto him: "Fear not, for I am with thee: I am thy very large reward." It is true that this was not spoken expressly to him, but that which was spoken to his father was as well spoken to him. For he was the heir of that promise.

Seeing then he waited not upon God, herein he is reprov'd of infidelity. It is true that Faith lets not but that we may apprehend those dangers, wherewith we are beset round about: For Faith serves not to make us insensible. And this should be no virtue to us to call upon God unless we were provok'd, seeing that we cannot escape danger without his aid: but there is a great difference, whether our fear be such as makes us to go out of the right path or rather be as a spur unto us to provoke us to go unto God.

If Isaac had thought thus with himself, "It behooves that I return to my God, for I have no other refuge but to have recourse to his help; he has promised it me, yea and I have had already experience thereof in my need. It must therefore needs be that his truth yet declare and show itself towards me." If Isaac had been come thus far, it is certain that his faith had been so much the better tried: and his fear had shown as if he had been strengthened in God being weak in himself: but when he is overcome with fear and farther takes such counsel as God condemns: therein he frames not himself to the duty of a faithful man.

When Isaac went thus, herein he shows he fears, inasmuch as he was not sufficiently given to the word of God, and that his faith was not well resolved: but in that he wavers and varies, hereby he shows that he did not steadfastly trust in God as he should.

But now we see Isaac's fault, we must so much the rather be warn'd (as we have already said) that in all the objects which we shall have to make us afraid, that we always do God this honor, that there is sufficient in him to remedy it, that if we call upon him, and after that we use the means that he has left unto us, and which he allows, without going beyond our bounds either to the right hand or to the left.

Isaac therefore did no wrong at all to them of that country, but to God, which is much more. And moreover, he is not wholly to be excused, seeing he conceived such a judgment of his own head: For although there were no fear of God in that place, nor true Religion in that country, yet so it is that true charity is not suspicious. None had yet done him any scathe or injury, ought he then at the first dash to have condemned them? For this cause God suffered this evil to come upon him: and yet shows him singular mercy: For his wife might have been ravished, as also might have come to pass to his father.

Behold a king who is of the country of Gerar, and yet God bridles him from doing any hurt to Isaac, yea knowing well that he had no such virtue in himself as was in his father Abraham, like as we have showed already. And mark also wherefore God prevents him: when he had determined to go into Egypt, he withdraws him, as it were by force, and forbids him to go out of the land which he had promised him. We have showed already that God, according to the measure he has given us, does also prove us. He works therefore in all men, as in sundry shops and by instruments which are not of the same power.

So, mark Isaac who was spared for once: but also we see how pitiful and kind the Lord was unto him when he loosed not the bridle to King Abimelech to do that unto him which was done unto Abraham his father. For if we demand why it fell out at one time and not at another. It is certain that God governed this by his wonderful counsel: for after he once looses the reins unto men, it is certain that they pass their bounds. And it is said expressly that he holds the hands of Kings in his hand, and that he turns them hither and thither as he thinks good.

So then it behooves us to conclude that the heart of the king of Gerar was held so that it desired not Rebecca: otherwise, he had been subject to that concupiscence, that poor Isaac should have been thereby tormented even unto the uttermost and had been swallowed up with terrible distresses. But (as we have said) God, who is faithful, spares his own, or tries them more to the quick, according to the power that he knows to be in them.

Moreover, when we shall be so fearful and so weak, that with much ado, we shall be scarcely able (as a man would say) to bear one fillip: yet let us trust that God will give us strength when it shall please him to draw us out to a more hard trial. But notwithstanding this ought not to make us careless. If I feel myself feeble, and that I say, "Oh, God will spare me, for he knows that I can bear nothing," it is certain that I shall be punished for my unthankfulness. And why so? So far forth as we are weak, we must run unto him who has all power to supply our wants.

And therefore let us learn when it is said that God will help us, and that he will give us strength to endure all the combats which shall be directed against us, this is to the end we should learn to exercise ourselves in prayer day by day. And therefore let us not be sluggish, because it is said that God strengthens his own, all after as it shall please him to draw them into trial: but let this serve to make us always to look more closely unto ourselves: and after we know our miseries, that we should seek for remedy, and pray him that it would please him never to suffer us to fall in any sort whatsoever, but that he will support us, or else when he wills that we shall fight more courageously, that he will give us wherewithal that we may be armed from above, as he knows best always how to give victory to those that trust in him, and who fight not but under his banner.

Mark then concerning the diversity we read between Abraham and Isaac. Now it is said:

"That the King saw Isaac sporting himself with Rebecca his wife, and that afterwards he called him and said unto him: For a truth, that is thy wife."

By this, we may see that there was a great deal more integrity at that time than there is at this day, and that whoredoms and dissolute lives were not so common. For some men at the first dash would have set up a sinister judgment against Isaac. It must needs be therefore that men had more honesty than is to be seen in our time. And seeing there is no doubt that Isaac, getting this reputation amongst all, that he was no villain nor whoremonger, that under color of saying she was his sister carried a whore after him. There is no doubt (I say) but when both he and his manner of life was known, but that everyone was persuaded that he was a holy man, and fearing God, and that he was not given to any such vices and enormities.

And this is a point which we ought well to mark: For there is no man that would not be counted an honest man: and so soon as men do conceive any evil of us, we think that they do us great wrong: and yet in the meanwhile, we regard not to use the means that should not cause us to be ill thought of, and how to avoid that men should not charge us with blames and faults. The means were so to bear and order ourselves, that all might have their mouths stopped: that first of all the fear of God bear rule in us, and next that we have our conversation with men, in love and in uprightness, even as God has commanded us the same. If we have this, it is certain that we shall stop up many wicked mouths.

But it is very true that the holiest and godliest men cannot many times let the wicked speak evil of them: For was not the Son of God

himself subject to slanders and opprobries? Was it not upbraided him that he blasphemed against God his father? But yet for all this, the Scripture says not without cause, that then we stop the mouths of the wicked when we shun all offenses, and when we do not only labor to abstain from evil, but also from all show of evil.

Wherefore they that have so great care of their credit and reputation, that they cannot abide to be abased either in one respect or other, let them have regard to the means: that is to say, let them prevent that they be not justly blamed, and herein they follow the example of Isaac. For we see that being a stranger in a barbarous country, where there was nothing but idolatry: nevertheless, so it is that he is yet esteemed for a man fearing God, and that they could not raise up an evil judgment of him. And why so? Because they were convinced of the contrary by his good life and honesty: Let us do the like, and it is certain, that we shall stop many slanders and many reproaches.

But yet we have further to note, that then there was such honesty amongst men, that if a man sported familiarly with his wife, it was in marriage. But nowadays all is so overflowed, that a man must shut his eyes against the greatest villainies of the world. Let a man go into Courts, oh, it is certain that therein the wickednesses are so unruly, as a man can behold nothing more. And especially if a husband sees his wife to be allured with another man's eye, and that some do abuse her thereby as though she were a harlot, he must set a good countenance upon it: for if he show any sign that he is grieved therewith, and that he does not laugh at it, as others do, oh, say they, he is a jealous fool and a dizzard. Lo how it is in this case: For men are come even to the heap of iniquity, in so much that they have lost all shamefacedness, because they are given to such beastly liberty, that there is no more honesty amongst them.

And I would to God this mischief were in no place else but in these courts: But it is even a deluge or flood, which a man shall see in all estates, yea even to the least, such gestures of incontinence, and dissolute wantonness, that it is pity to behold. But let us mark how far off we be from these men which were as it were miserable blind ones having no knowledge of God, having no law written, no nor yet any revelation: and yet notwithstanding they had this honesty, that none ticked nor toyed over familiarly with another man's wife, nor had any gestures whereby any evil might be suspected, as we see here. For truth (says he), this is thy wife. And whereupon does he conclude it? It is because that vice was not accustomed there: and it was not come in use nor in possession among men, in such sort but that they might easily discern between marriage and whoredom.

Now this teaches us to behave ourselves each towards others, that there be no unchaste looks, no vicious gestures: but that we be in such sort pure from all evil, that even before men we give no occasion to speak evil, nor yet to think evil of us. It is true that he speaks here of some gesture which was over familiar to a strange man: For it need not be that we should be so austere, that we cannot live together, without giving occasion of evil: and yet in the meantime living in familiarity, yea and sporting ourselves with all honesty, showing that we have chaste hearts, chaste eyes, and all our senses chaste.

But when Isaac played thus with his wife, he made some sign of a husband to his wife: so that it might be judged either this man is a whoremonger, or else he must needs be her husband. Now to think him a whoremonger, they could not, because he had behaved himself honestly in the fear of God, and with the goodwill of everyone in the country of Gerar: he must therefore be esteemed for her husband. But hereupon Isaac confesses his fault: but he confesses it alleging

that he feared, lest he should have been killed. Here things are rehearsed more briefly than we have seen before. For Abraham was rebuked more sharply: and likewise he makes a more long excuse thereof. I did know (says he) that there was no fear of God in this Country. Only Isaac says, I feared lest they would kill me.

Now he shows here that although Rebecca were his sister, nevertheless, seeing that his purpose was to cloak the truth: it was to be condemned. So likewise, when we will be very subtle for a time, let us not be so obstinate as altogether to maintain all that we have said and done (although there be some fault in us): but let us frankly acknowledge it. For Isaac might have said, yes, she is my sister. But notwithstanding that which he had said, he adds that he was to be blamed, as also Abimelech did: For he saw just cause to condemn Isaac, and therefore he says unto him,

"Wherefore hast thou done this thing?" Now we have to note on the one side, that which was alleged before: that is to say, that God had reproved and chastised the kings because of his servants, albeit they were but a few in number, albeit they were as poor wandering people in the land of Canaan. And seeing God maintained their quarrel, and set himself against all the violence and evil that could be done unto them: hereby he shows the singular favor that he did bear unto them. And also the Prophet adds, that for this cause he says:

"Touch not mine anointed, and do my Prophets no harm."

It is true that there was in Abraham and Isaac excellent virtue and holiness: but however it be, yet so it is that we at this day are also anointed to be under the keeping of God, and we succeed to all the promises which were given unto them. So then, though we shall be never so small a number, and as a poor despised people, as sheep in the throat of wolves, yet let us not doubt, but that God has wherewith

to defend us, and that he will display his power, as much as shall be necessary, yea and that against the mightiest Kings of the world. For sometimes God has indeed suffered that those of the meaner and common sort of people have vexed and molested his servants, as we shall see hereafter, and that very shortly. Whatever it be, when he has declared that he foresees the war, and that he sets himself in order against the Kings: Hereby he has showed that the life of his servants is dear and precious unto him. Let us therefore hope the like, and we shall not be deceived. And when we shall see the mightiest of the world to be our enemies, and shall daily hear rumors of many tumults and troubles: let us not doubt, but that our Lord will remedy all, and will always be our buckler to put back all our blows, when it shall be most like that they must fall upon our heads.

Lo, what we have to put in practice by the example of Isaac. And although here God afflicted not Abimelech as before, and that he reprov'd him not as he had done the king of Egypt: nevertheless he keeps him bridled, and holds him as it were in fear: so that although Rebecca were fair, yet it fell so out: that the king of the country desired her not, no albeit he imagined that it had been lawful for him to have taken her to wife. Look then on the one side what we have to mark: on the other this, that nevertheless God humbled Isaac and suffered not his infidelity to remain altogether unpunished: yet the punishment is very gentle, But however it was, he was reformed.

Now if nothing had happened unto Isaac, and that it had not been perceived that Rebecca had been his wife, he had not returned from it, neither had he ever remembered his fault which he had committed: and specially he had pleased himself herein, because the event was good and as he would have wished, and therefore he would have thought that God would have allowed it. For men when their faults are not showed them, flatter and harden themselves in them.

But God works our good and salvation when he makes us to feel our sins, and corrects us in such sort, that we are even compelled to think upon them.

Mark then how it fell out herein to Isaac. It is very true that God did bear with him very much, when he suffered nothing to be attempted against his wife, that the very king of the country called so gently for him, and complained to him as to his equal and companion. Behold a wonderful support: and hereby we see that God has pity upon his, not trying them further than they are able to bear. But whatever it is, yet so it is that Isaac comes to acknowledge his sin. And who is judge thereof? even a poor pagan, an Idolater. God might rather have sent an Angel from heaven, or else have given him some revelation to have said unto him, what dost thou? But he leaves him there: For he was not worthy to be taught so honorably, but the blind ones must discover his evil and condemn him.

See then, the shame that was done unto him, to the end that he might be the more humbled thereby, and to the end that he might learn for ever after, better to trust in God, and no more to fall into that fault. This is what we have to mark. And with all let us take good heed unto ourselves, and let us not care that men reprove us: but let us take in good part all corrections that God sends us by his word. For what honor does he unto us, when he provokes us to come unto him, and when with doctrine he joins exhortations? And after, when he sees that we are too slow, and besides that we are as it were incorrigible, he uses more sharp reprehensions. But whatever it be, all this is done in his name, that when we read in the holy Scripture, and that we come to the Sermon, and that there he summons us, he is always our Judge.

And lo, also why our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking of the preaching of the Gospel, says: "When the Holy Ghost shall come, he shall judge the world." The spirit of God therefore exercises his jurisdiction upon us: and to what end? It is to the end that when we have been condemned, so that we do pass willing condemnation, and that we be apt to learn, and that we ask pardon, he is ready to give us. So then, seeing that God has done us this honor to judge us as it were in his house, and privately by ourselves: when he shows us our faults, are not we overmuch hardened, if we do not bow down our neck, and become apt to learn, and be ready to be reformed by him? For if we will rebel so against him, God will suffer that we come to another school, and that even the wicked and unbelievers condemn us. We shall find very many even in this case, that fret themselves and gnash their teeth, if a man scratch their scabs and rub them on the gall, when they come to the Sermon. For see their replies: was the Scripture made to spur poor people in such sort? and is this the manner to teach, to cry out after such a fashion? It seems that he would lighten against us. But in the end God teaches them after another sort: that is, that his trumpet must sound, and that their shame must be published in every place, and in the end they must go to the school of the Gibbet. And moreover when we make not our profit of the corrections which are daily set before us, it must needs be that we be condemned an hundred miles off, and that by good right. But if herein we suffered alone, there were no danger: the worst is that the name of God is blasphemed through our wickedness.

So then, let us learn by this example to become so tractable and apt to be taught and wrought upon, that when God shall reprove us, we willingly suffer ourselves to be condemned of him, and that we be ashamed of ourselves: to the end that our shame and infamy be not discovered and laid open to the whole world. Look then what we

have farther to learn of this place. But it is said that Abimelech complaining to Isaac added,

"It was not far off, that some of the people had not lain by thy wife: and thou caused great evil to come upon us."

Concerning the first point, here Isaac is reproved, of his inconsideration and folly. For that as much as was in him, he laid his wife open to be defiled. And why so? We have seen before that the husband ought to be as a veil or covering to his wife. When a woman shall be married, and that her husband shall live with her doing his duty, this is to the end, she may be there as it were in safeguard, and that none come to deceive nor defile her. Now therefore Isaac, for the discharging of his duty, ought to have been as a veil or covering to his wife: that is to say, under the name of a husband and of marriage: he ought to have let that none should have attempted to withdraw her, whether it were to have her to wife, or after any other manner: For marriage is as a safeguard, (as we have said) and God would have it honored in all ages. And although adulterers would abandon it, as Swine and Asses: yet notwithstanding they have always had remorse in it: and evermore even amongst the Pagans, adulterers went not unpunished. It is known that if ever anything in this world was privileged it was marriage: yea, and thefts and other crimes ought a great deal rather to be borne with, than such enormities: to wit, when the covenant and company which God has dedicated in his name, to the end it should be holy, as it were separated from profanation, is violated.

When therefore this was violated, the Pagans knew that it was so great an abomination, that in no wise it ought to be borne with. Now therefore by the way, Abimelech finds fault with Isaac, concerning this, that he had thus prostituted his wife, as much as lay in him. And

we are taught by this doctrine to meet with dangers beforehand, and not to tempt God by our rashness and folly. Let us take good heed therefore how we cloak evil, and (as a man would say) shut the door against God: so that through our rashness and unadvisedness God be offended. Look then the wisdom which we ought to have: and therefore because we have it not, we must ask it of God.

But now for the second matter Abimelech says:

"Thou hadst made great evil to come upon us."

And how? when any of the people had committed adultery, and that he had so offended, whatever grief soever it had been, he should only have deserved to be punished: and ought then a whole country to have answered it? Now we see here that a miserable heathen, an unbeliever, and a poor blind person, knew that the land should be defiled by an adulterer: and that if this remained unpunished, notwithstanding before God, lo an whole people culpable therein, in respect of the temporal punishment. It is true that God knows how to turn the chastisements that he sends to them that are innocent from that fault to their profit: For if they suffer, which consented not unto the evil, this shall not be altogether as if they had been faulty: But God turns this to their salvation. In the meanwhile so it is that he never chastises them without cause: if we see it not now with our eye, yet when all those registers shall be opened, then we shall find, that God has not gone (as they say) indirectly and awry. And when he sends general punishments upon a whole people, for one particular fault as it seems, nevertheless he knows well that all be not innocent therein, as it is expressly said here, and as also Abimelech understood. For when adulteries are committed, and are not punished, lo an infection which creeps over the whole land: but shall we yet say that a man is innocent therein, when we close our eyes,

and when we suffer all this to overflow? Although a man be no judge but a private person, yet he ought to oppose himself as much as lies in him.

Now on the other side there is not any one, but he spreads the sail instead that he should let the evil: if we had the courage and zeal of God, we would procure that he might be served and honored, as he is worthy. But this we do not: there is a certain faintness and sluggishness in all. To be short, vices never reigned, and had sway in any Country, but both great and small were partakers therein, by reason of their too much patience or dissimulation or coldness. Mark then why God punishes sins not without cause.

But moreover concerning adultery, we see what a miserable Heathen has pronounced. Let us therefore be ashamed when such a great evil shall reign in the midst of us: and let us know, that there shall need no other Judge to condemn us, us (I say) that have been baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we shall maintain such filthinesses & infections, seeing a poor miserable blind Heathen, knew well what heinous enormity there was in such a vice. Look then what we have to learn, that we may make our profit of this place. And farther, let us learn to honor Marriage, seeing God has dedicated it, and that it is a covenant which he has consecrated in his name: that also it be maintained in his honor and dignity, and that both Husbands and Wives dwell in such honesty one with the other, that each one may govern their houses in peace and quietness, and that there be no looseness amongst us: but that we know that we have better profited in the School of God, then our Father Isaac had done in this point, for as much as he declined therein.

But now let us prostrate ourselves before the high majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses, praying him that it will

please him, to make us feel the infirmities & vices that are in us, to the end that we may be displeased therewith, in such sort, that we may fight against them, and not to give ourselves any liberty therein: and when we have offended, that we may be touched with such repentance, that we may return to him, and mourn for them, until he have reformed us by his holy spirit, and have drawn us into a good way, after that we shall have strayed from it. And that withal he would in the meanwhile so support us in our weakness, that we never leave to be his Children, albeit we honor him not as our father, as were meet. And that he will not only show us this favor, but also to all peoples & nations of the earth etc.

## **The Eighth Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 26.**

11 And Abimelech commanded all his people saying, "He that shall touch this man or his wife, he shall undoubtedly die the death."

12 Now Isaac sowing in that land, he got every year a hundred measures: so did Jehovah bless him.

13 So did that man increase, and grow on with a continual increase, even until he was very rich.

14 For he had great possession of flocks, and possession of droves, and so great a family, that the Philistines envied him.

15 And they dammed up all the Wells, which his father's servants had digged, in the time of his father Abraham filling them up with earth.

16 So as Abimelech said unto Isaac, "Depart from us, for thou art made mightier than we."

17 Therefore Isaac departed from thence, and pitching his tents in the valley of Gerar, he settled there,

18 (For Isaac had digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the time of Abraham his father, and which the Philistines had dammed up after the death of Abraham: and he had given them names, according to the names which his father had given them.)

19 And the servants of Isaac digging in the same valley, they found there a well of living waters.

20 Now the Shepherds of Gerar, contended with Isaac's shepherds saying: "These waters are ours." Wherefore they called the name of that well Esek, because they had moved strife with them of their own accord.

21 Afterwards when they had digged another well, they contended also for that. Wherefore he called the name of that Sitnah.

We have seen how God had pity upon Isaac, although he was worthy to have been forsaken in the time of his necessity: For this was a singular favour, that Rebecca's chastity was kept: because Isaac had given it over, and as much as was in him forsaken it, for the safeguard of his own life. Loe a distrust which deserved rather severe

chastisement: but yet would God support him, and be the protector of his wife, who otherwise was forsaken. Now it is said here, that God stretched out his mercy farther: that is to say, that he would have Isaac to be in safety for the time to come, and that none should molest him either in his own person, or concerning his wife. And in very deed it must needs be that this provision was freely given him: For it might have been laid in his dish that he had not greatly passed that his wife had been put to shame and reproach. And this was to cause him every day to have many quarrels. But herein God tries him: and yet he uses the King of the country, to the end he might be in rest, to the end that none should come to assail him. It is therefore ordained that none shall touch him upon pain of death. Now this was done by special privilege according to that we have alleged out of the Psalms. That God for the favour he did bear to Abraham & Isaac, even chastised Kings & rebuked peoples: but yet so much as we may gather that Abimelech, being seized with fear, made a decree which was very right. And why was not this law perpetual? Because that men who have not the lively root of the fear of God, do nothing but by force and violence, there is no hold nor constancy in them, as we shall find oftentimes. But inasmuch then as Abimelech perceived, that if Isaac were offended or that any did him any wrong, that this should not remain unpunished, & that God would take vengeance of it: Loe why he was thus bridled.

Now this is rehearsed unto us above all, to the end we might know, how God has kept his own, though they have dwelt amongst wicked & cruel people, as it were amongst savage beasts: nevertheless he has maintained them by his power: & this is to the end that we likewise should trust in him. For the goodness of God, which he used towards our old fathers, is not only rehearsed unto us, to the end that we should know that he was then pitiful towards them which trusted in him: but that we should not doubt, that he will suffer us to be

molested at this day, so that we have our refuge unto him: and when we know that he will be on our side, that we be also certain that he will maintain our part, and that his protection will be enough for us, against whatsoever, men shall be able to attempt or devise against us.

When therefore we shall have such an affiance, the example of Isaac which is here rehearsed unto us, ought to serve us for an instruction, as if God should show us his hand stretched out, to help and succour us in our need. And specially when our enemies shall be strong and mighty, and that nothing shall be able to let them here below, from oppressing us, then let us know that God will not cease to put to his helping hand. For we know what he has said by his Prophet Isaiah touching his Church, that it is more precious unto him, than all the Realms and Empires of this world.

Now admit we be never so much despised of worldlings, that we seem not worthy to them (as a man would say) to be cast to the Dogs: Yet however it be, forasmuch as God has once declared that we are his flock, and that he has taken us into his charge, let us assure ourselves, that he will not fail us, when we shall be assaulted of them who torment us, and to whom it seems, that God must not touch them. But moreover Moses adds:

"That Isaac sowing, he gathered an hundred measures."

That is to say, an hundred times as much as he sowed. Here a question might be asked, seeing Isaac had not one foot of land, how he could sow. But some imagine that he had purchased some there: but this were against all reason. For it must be that the fathers content themselves with the promise which was given them, and that they dwell in the land of promise as strangers. And indeed, it is said soon after, that Isaac pitched his tents, to declare that he had no

certain house nor building. We see therefore that he was a vagabond in earth, as was his father Abraham: but he might well hire some land to sow therein: For he had a great family: as we saw Abraham himself had, who gathered out of his house more than four hundred chosen men, to enter into battle. Isaac had not much diminished it as we see: likewise it must be that he could not be much increased, especially dwelling in a strange country: he had hired some farm or taken some land to sow therein: according as we know that the ancient fathers, although God had enriched them, yet they ceased not to give themselves to labor both they and their household. For although they had both riches and commodities, yet they abused not those benefits that God had so bountifully bestowed upon them, in pomp or in Idleness to become Kings: but to maintain always themselves in the mean estate. Mark then briefly what we have to learn, when Isaac having hired some possession sowed therein. And this is rehearsed of Moses because he adds, that GOD blessed him therein, and made him so to prosper, that he gathered in a hundred fold. But we shall find it strange in this country, which was so hungry and as it were barren in comparison of Judea and Syria, and of those Countries thereabouts: especially when he spoke of a hundred fold, for as much as the thing may seem incredible unto us: because we esteem that which is spoken unto us according to what we have seen.

But it is not without cause that our Lord Jesus Christ, declares this unto us by a similitude, taken from the seed which is sown: although he spoke to another purpose: but notwithstanding he says that when men shall sow, one part falls into the path, and the fowls of the air devour it: another shall fall among stones, and this shall take no root: for it has no nourishment: The other part shall be choked among bushes and thorns: But that which falls into good ground (says he) shall bring fruit, one thirty, the other sixty, and the last an hundred fold.

When we come thus far (as I have said) we cannot be persuaded therein, unless the son of God had spoken it. But the ancient fathers, who have written of the land of Chaldea, and especially have been in the same place, & know it thoroughly, they say that the ordinary increase was eighty and a hundred. But here because he spoke of the country of the Philistines which was fertile, but not as Chaldea, therefore Moses rehearses that, for a singular gift which God gave unto Isaac, that he gathered a hundred fold. Lo here a sign of the blessing of God upon Isaac, yea concerning that, which belonged unto this transitory life. For although the ancient fathers always respected the heavenly inheritance, and bent all their affections thitherward: yet notwithstanding being mortal men, they needed that God should give them some taste of his goodness in this world. For that which S. Paul says, has always place here: That the fear of God has the promises not only of everlasting life, but also of this present life. While we are in this life God will not give us the fullness of those blessings he promises us: For in very deed, we would have our paradise here, and we would cast our eyes no further but all our senses would be clean glutted, if GOD should give us in all respects such abundance as we require, & therefore he gives us only a little taste of his goodness, to the end to draw us on further. But what though? yet can we but in part acknowledge that God is our father not only by the testimony that we have thereof from his mouth, but also by those blessings which he liberally bestows upon us. And here we behold both these things, in this history which Moses sets down: that is to say, that God blesses his own, in such sort, that they have occasion to rejoice in him: & yet in that he divides their morsels in such a portion, that they be always in mourning whilst they are in this world, and thereby are occasioned to cast their eyes farther. For mark our father Isaac, he prospers, he increases, and becomes mighty, so says Moses: & he does not only say that God blessed him

at once: but that he multiplied him in such sort that he always grew & waxed richer and richer. But on the other side he adds:

"That the Philistines envied him."

We see that Isaac had such cause to rejoice in God for the prosperity which was given unto him, that yet notwithstanding God awakened him, and mixed his sweet meat with some sour sauce. This was a great cause of joy unto him when GOD did so sensibly multiply him. It was as it were a looking glass to all the Philistines, wherein to behold what it was to serve God: yet notwithstanding this turns to his trouble & causes him to be molested.

We see then how God tempers his benefits which he bestows liberally upon his children (I say, the temporal benefits which concern this life) that they can never settle themselves and rest therein. But yet here further a question might be asked, why God caused Isaac so to prosper, that the inhabitants of the country should rise up against him. Had it not been much better for him that he had continued in a mean estate, & had lived quiet under his tent than to be so enriched that every one should war against him, & that they could not abide him, fearing lest he would become Lord over them, and tread them under his feet?

If GOD had kept such a mean, it seems that it had been more profitable to Isaac. Wherefore then is it that he does multiply him, and that this is the cause that he is pursued, yea, and that he has no water for himself neither for his family or for his cattle? But God is so wise in disposing all things, that if he make his servants to prosper, he shows them that they ought to keep themselves fast unto him, and that they have occasion to bless him. And yet notwithstanding: when he lays them open to troubles and vexations, he turns this also to their good.

So then we must mark this for a rule, That all the graces which we receive from the hand of God in this world, they are joined with some miseries, & that our honey is never pure, but always there is some vinegar mixed with it: God could well take another course, if it had pleased him: but we must be subject unto him, and be content with that, that he does, although that our senses and the lusts of our flesh resist against it. And true it is that a man who were well advised, would never seek to be rich nor wealthy: and so that he might have competent for meat and drink & clothing: he would seek for no other state or condition.

Yet notwithstanding it pleases God to exercise one sort with poverty, and to be bountiful towards others: and both poor and rich may be faithful, and both two the children of God. I speak not of all in general: but we see that there are some fearing God, who are not all of like estate, & condition: Some of them have wealth enough for their maintenance, yea & that to make them live with some credit and countenance amongst men: others some have scarcely a morsel of bread to eat.

Now if it were in us to order this matter, we would that God should use rather an equal and like measure: yea, but he knoweth wherefore he chooseth rather such a diversity. And therefore (as I have said) it is for us to content ourselves with his pleasure. And so when it pleases him to make his servants to prosper in such sort, that we may know for a surety that his blessing resteth in their persons, it is a testimony of his goodness: and hereof they ought to make their profit. But when there is any sourness mingled with it, they ought to think, GOD would not that I should sleep here, nor rest myself so upon these earthly benefits, that they should make me to forget everlasting life.

It behooves therefore that the faithful have this wisdom and consideration in them, that always they know how to make their profit, of those benefits that God bestows upon them: & in the meantime that they forget not the favor that he hath showed unto them? although that they have many cares, griefs, troubles and wrongs, which shall be done unto them by men. And namely here both the rich & poor, are taught their duty.

When a man shall be afflicted with poverty and need, yet in the meantime God will not suffer him to be so destitute and forsaken, but that always he shall have some little portion, to the end he may feel that God has care of him. And therefore when the faithful have not all that they desire: but God leaves them there as if he forsook them: they must not therefore murmur against him nor think that he has cast them off: but how little soever it be, that he has given them (yea be it never so little) they must apply it to taste the goodness of God, so that they may call upon him as their father, and put their trust in him, and patiently bear their condition, which otherwise would be hard and miserable unto them.

And as for the rich, when they shall have more wealth than they have need of, if this breeds them any care, and brings some grief as the common Proverb is: He that has land, has war at hand. If a man has but an Acre of ground, he shall either be drawn into suit of law, or else he shall have some other trouble about it. As for the rich (I say) when they see these things, that they cannot possess their goods with peace and quietness, but that they shall always have some trouble and disquietness with all: let them know that for all this, they must not be distasted, & that the blessing of God always gives them courage to trust in him: and that they be not led to unthankfulness and forgetfulness: but that always they bless his name.

And this is it that we have to note out of this place where it is said, that, God made Isaac to prosper, & that this was the cause that moved the inhabitants of the country to envy him, who therefore did drive him out from among them. Now it is said expressly:

That the king of Gerar sent unto him saying, we cannot suffer thee to tarry among us, for thou art mightier than we.

Here we see more clearly that which erst I touched: to wit, that they that are not well rooted in the fear of God may do virtuous acts: but this is as it were by blasts & they do not continue, there is no perseverance unless it be in them whom God governs, & whom he has so reformed by his holy spirit, that they follow on their course till they come to the goal: yet notwithstanding even the faithful themselves are not so constant in well doing, but many times they tread awry & go out of the way: but God corrects them, & when they are strayed here and there, he brings them back into the good way.

But as for them whom he has not yet regenerated and borne anew, & who keep their natural inclination, although it seems oftentimes that they will do marvels, yet loe in the turning of a hand they are changed. We see this in the king of Gerar, ere while he was as an Angel: for when he spoke of abusing another man's wife, he said that it was to infect the whole country, and to cause the vengeance of God to come upon great and small. Behold, a divine sentence, it seems that God spoke by his mouth, and indeed there is no doubt but that this confession was wrung from him both against himself, & against all those, who esteemed this (as a man should say) for a venial sin.

Behold then Abimelech who shows that God had even enforced him & inflamed him with such a zeal, that he had this fault in great detestation, for he knew that it was displeasing to God. And thereupon he caused his Proclamation to be made, that no man

should touch Isaac nor his wife, upon pain of death. This is yet another commendable point: It seemeth therefore that Abimelech was wholly become fearing GOD: but straightway after he saith unto Isaac, Away, get thee hence. He driveth out Isaac: he knoweth that Isaac is under the protection of God: and when he attempteth anything against him, is it not as it were to despise God, and to break the safeguard which he hath set upon his servant?

Let us learn therefore, that seeing it is so, to be so conversant amongst those which have no fear of God, as that, if they be gentle & courteous for a time unto us, & afterwards be changed, that we bear it with patience, and that we be ready to suffer injury of them, after they have done us good. Moreover let us know that unless God have imprinted his fear in us, and given us a lively root of it, we should never have any constancy or steadiness in us. Let us pray unto him that it would please him to show unto us by effect, that he has truly renewed us by his holy spirit: & that we have not a zeal like unto a fire of stubble which quickly goes out: but that we may desire always to march onwards in his obedience and to continue therein: and although that we sometimes slide from it, as we are very weak, notwithstanding that we be not clean misled and carried away from him, but that we may follow on our course even unto the end. And so we have to beseech him from day to day, that he will increase in us the graces of his holy spirit: for were our desire never so good, it is certain that we should be quickly cold: and as our nature is inconstant, we should from this day ere tomorrow be changed, were it not that God continued to govern us. This is it in sum that we have to mark.

Now the reason that is here brought by Abimelech, is taken from common experience: For we know that rich men despise the poor, & he that hath much, thinketh that others are not equal unto him:

thereupon is he by and by puffed up with pride and boldness, and cruelty followeth: as it is said, Men are like unto horses, when they are well fed, they are wanton and untamed, they kick, they bite: to be short, they will not be ridden. And thus fareth it most commonly with men. So then, when a man cometh to be of great substance & wealth, it is certain that by nature he will be bent to advance himself, and pride will bear sway in him. And so is it expressly said of Sodom, That when they had great abundance of wealth, they became proud, & afterwards followed cruelty, so that they had no pity upon their poor neighbors to help them. And this is as it were almost an ordinary matter.

So then, when Abimelech says unto Isaac: Thou art stronger than we: depart therefore and get thee hence. This is because men do abuse the graces of God, and cannot content themselves with sobriety nor modesty, when God does advance us.

Now we know hereby, how perverse we are: for in that God showeth himself liberal towards us, it is certain that he draweth near unto us, and draweth us near unto him: & this should give us an occasion to humble ourselves so much the more. For there is nothing that ought more to bring us into order, and to do our duty, than when God showeth himself in this sort unto us, and that we walk as it were in his sight. But if we abuse his graces, and (as I have already said) if riches engender in us both pride and presumption, and thereupon contempt of those which are our inferiors, and afterwards cruelty, so as we torment one and molest another: we devour this man here and that man there, is not this to turn light into darkness? So then we have to know the perversity which is in us, and whereunto we are not only inclined, but also given, unless that God do withdraw us from it. Now when God deals well with his children, it is certain that he does correct this vice in them, that they have no lust to advance

themselves, to put out their horns, and to show forth their jollities, and to tread under their feet those which are not equal unto them: and we have already declared, that there is always mingled a certain cooling, to the end they should not glory and flatter themselves too much in their felicity. However it be, it must be that he works herein by his holy spirit, for there will never be any modesty in us, whenever any occasion is offered unto us to advance ourselves: The pill of an Onion (as the common Proverb says) is enough to make us to forget from whence we are, and to make us drunken with arrogance, and to despise all others.

But Isaac was not so given to pride and presumption: and Abimelech does him wrong. But (as I have said) he measured it according to the common Elle, because that the fashion of men is always to oppress the least, when they can do it, and to take, leave according to their might to hurt.

And therefore it is that Abimelech says: Thou art more strong than we. And hereupon we have to note that God admonishes us by this common example, to carry ourselves peaceably & modestly: when we have any occasion offered us to make any account of ourselves: that we lay it aside, & be so much the more careful to keep ourselves in our degree, yea in the basest, and in the meantime, if it please him to bring us down and to hold us in a low and despised condition, let us know that he does it for our good, & that it is as a preservative medicine: and let us know, that if we were advanced to any high place or honor, that it would be to make us stark blind.

And this is it that we have to bear away in this place. Now it is said afterwards:

That Isaac came into the valley of Gerar. He went not quite out of the country: but he went apart, to the end not to be any more in their

sight, & to take away all occasion of malice, from all the inhabitants of Gerar: for we know what manner of people the Philistines were. Here we see in the first place the patience of Isaac: who not only replied not: but to purchase peace and rest, trust up his baggage & went his way, to pitch his tent elsewhere, and herein he has showed his humility. It is true that he went not quite out of the country: but yet notwithstanding he might have made some resistance, for to have tarried in that place, where he had as it were taken a Farm. We have seen that his father Abraham had as it were prepared a little army in his house: he might have therefore done the like, and so might have withstood the wrong which was done unto him. But he is so far off from this, that he is as it were a Lamb: and Moses says not, that he moved any great contention, or that he skirmished, though he were chased from them & that wrongfully, after they had received him, and after they had showed him some sign of courtesy: but he leaves all. So then we are taught when we shall be oppressed, to bear our wrongs patiently, and not to take the sword in hand, to work our revenge, when it shall seem that we have a just cause before men. For we know what is commanded us: to wit, to give place unto wrath: that is, to suffer that God revenge for us, and so let us follow our father Isaac, in that that he suffered himself, to be wickedly driven out of the country, where he had so behaved himself, that he ought rather to have been beloved of all. For what occasion had they given them that they should suspect any evil in him? And yet notwithstanding they cast him out, and say that he is too strong, as though he had abused his greatness. So this is one lesson touching this retreat of Isaac, where it is said that he came into the valley of Gerar.

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not to take the sword in hand, to work our revenge, when it shall seem that we have a just cause before men. For we know what is commanded us: to wit, to give place unto wrath: that is, to suffer that God revenge for us, and so let us follow our father Isaac, in that that he suffered himself, to be wickedly driven out of the country, where he had so behaved himself, that he ought rather to have been beloved of all. For what occasion had they given them that they should suspect any evil in him? And yet notwithstanding they cast him out, and say that he is too strong, as though he had abused his greatness. So this is one lesson touching this retreat of Isaac, where it is said that he came into the valley of Gerar.

Moreover, it is said here expressly, that Isaac kept the names of the Wells, as we have seen of Beersheba, which was the Well of the oath, inasmuch as Abimelech had there sworn with Abraham. Now this was to maintain possession: For this was as much as a public instrument or Indenture, or rather more. Abimelech had made a league there with Abraham: Lo, a promise made with a solemn ceremony, Abraham had acknowledged homage unto him for the Wells: the name testifies the same. So that Isaac pretends that the inhabitants knew, that this was a parcel of the inheritance which his father had purchased for him, and therefore that it was his own by law. But all this prevails nothing, what just title soever he had, yet notwithstanding they cease not to quarrel against him. Thus we see, however the children of God seek nothing else, but to enjoy that which is their own, and which it is lawful for them to use: notwithstanding they shall be thrust from it. For the contemners of God are impudent: and whatever men allege unto them, yet neither reason nor equity can prevail with them, and be made account of. When we shall see the like at this day, let us not think it a new and a strange thing. There was more simplicity in that time then, and yet

nevertheless we see that Isaac must be thrust from all that which he pretended as justly to be his, as was possible.

Now thereupon it is said, that he gave names to these two Wells which were taken from him, that is to say, for which he was drawn into law: that is to say, from which he was put: For it booteth him not to plead, as at this day: but by violence he is driven out of possession. Now there is no doubt when he gave these names of strife and brabble, or contention, but that this was done, as if he made his complaint to God, when he saw that men's ears were deaf, and all reasons excluded: he has no other way, but this to set up a memorial, to the end God might have pity upon him. Now therefore let us learn, when we can gain nothing by bringing forth our titles and right to keep that which is ours, & that which is given us: that yet notwithstanding we leave not off to trust that in the end God will have pity upon us.

Lo then what we have to do: That is, that as much as lies in us, we endeavour that men may leave us in peace, and that they come not to devour us. This shall always be lawful to the children of God: For however we be commanded to be as sheep amongst Wolves, yet has God permitted unto us a peaceable defence, inasmuch as he has taken us into his hands.

We must endeavour therefore, as much as lies in us, to repel all violences, wrongs, outrages and riots, that shall be done unto us, & all molestations that can be devised against us. Have we done this? If we gain nothing, and that men be so obstinately bent to mischief, and specially if they be possessed with such fury, that all reason be trodden under foot among them, let us have recourse unto God, and pray him that it will please him to take our cause into his own hands: and doubt we not, when men shall become so uncourteous, that they

shall deride at whatsoever we can allege, that in the end God will take order with them. Lo then what we have to bear away of the example of Isaac, when he named the wells. Strife, debate & contention. For this was not of Choler, or of the Spleen: as there are very many which will revenge themselves, and cast out some injurious word: but Isaac commended his cause to God: as also we are exhorted by Saint Peter, that if we be envied of men & can find no remedy at their hands, that then we wait when God will put to his hand, as surely he will.

Now in the end it is said that Isaac having dug a Well for which he was not assailed, that he named it Rehoboth as if he should say, Largesses: and specially he putteth it in the plural number: and contenteth not himself to say. Lo, a Largesse but he saith, behold the Largesses which God hath bestowed upon us. We yet see more plainly that which I have touched before: That is, when Isaac was in so great distress that he had no water to drink, that men were so cruel unto him that he could not drink of the water which he had dug by his own labour, and by the hands of his family, that he remits this matter to God, who is the just Judge.

But contrariwise, when God had compassion upon him, and that men came no more to torment him, and that he had water to drink for himself, and for all his company: Oh well says he. This is God that hath bestowed this upon me. He says not O: in the end yet I have obtained my purpose, These wicked ones have let me alone at the length: now let us take our ease? He speaketh not so simply, as a profane man would have done, but he would have a memorial of thanksgiving unto God, as he had set up memorials of his complaint to draw the Lord to have mercy upon him.

Likewise his mind is, now that this benefit of God should be as it were engraven there, and that men should speak of it, not only for

three days, but after his death: and that they should acknowledge that Well a sign of the favour that God had showed him. And let us note this circumstance: For he ceases not to give God thanks with a quiet heart, though he had been a long time afflicted. When we have endured long the like troubles, the graces of God are wont to be darkened by that feeling of our evil: and if God suffer us to languish for a time, although afterwards he reach out his hand unto us, yet we think it is not from him: but we attribute this to fortune.

But Isaac did not so: but although he was driven out, and that he had endured this for a long time, yet so soon as God had given him release, he blesses his name, and saith, God hath enlarged me. Lo (saith he) the largesses or bounties of God. which I behold in this Well. But now in the end we have to note the patience of Isaac, when we preach nowadays of patience, hardly can we get this point, that if we have to endure never so little, we be not by and by hot & angry: and when it seemeth that we are very patient, yet there will always be some grudging, unless God even at the first push comfort us: & in the meantime, what suffer we? Surely in a manner nothing. If we endure but a fillip, O, it is so hard as nothing can be harder: and moreover if men go on to do us wrong, O, we suffer too much. But we are far off from this lenity and softness, which is here showed us in our father Isaac. We will say I cannot bear it. If any man wrong us, but the value of three halfpence, or of some small portion of our good: O I can not endure it: this is too much. Yea but Isaac strived for water (I say strived,) he took not a sword to fight: but he suffered wrong: although he had dug the wells, and his father had purchased them with his own proper good, and that the King had made him a grant, and that he had dug them again, and taken a great deal of travail to have water to drink, notwithstanding all this, we see his patience. And so when God shall afflict us, and shall loose the bridle to the wicked, that we shall be peeled & polled of them, let us yet know that

we are not come to that extremity, not to have a drop of water, and to have those elements taken from us, which God would have common amongst men. For every man will have his portion apart, both of corn, and of wine, of flesh, and such like things, and of movable and possessions: every one will have his own: but as for water, it is an Element which God hath ordained for all men.

When there are rivers, wells, and fountains in any highway: why should they be taken away from those that are the creatures of God? But however it be, yet it fell out that our fathers were brought to such extremity. And this (as I have already touched) serves to this purpose that we should learn to be patient, not only to suffer some one little injury, or two or three: but that in all respects we should be so meek and soft-natured: that if it were in a matter of life and death (as they say) we put our hope in God, that he will show himself pitiful towards us. And therefore let us not double our evil, let us not make of one devil two, when the wicked and ungodly persecute us unjustly: but let us labor to soften their hearts, and to assuage the malice which they use against us. If we do so, it is certain, that however we be for a time in extreme anguish, yet in the end God will so enlarge us, that we shall have good cause to bless his holy name with full mouth.

Their dwelling, they must be flitting and have no resting place, unless they be lodged from day to day (as it were) by the hand of God, and in the meantime, that they prepare themselves to wander & go from place to place, after the example of their fathers, who learned by experience not to have their inheritance here beneath upon earth, & confessed themselves to be Pilgrims, as we shall see hereafter that Jacob answered Pharaoh. In the meantime we may see also the malice of all those near neighbors thereabouts: For the wells especially, which Abraham had bought, were taken from him after

his death, to the end that his successors and children might have no use of them. But it is said that Isaac yet dug a well there: for he could not be without water, both for the family he had, which was great, as for his cattle: but he went very far to seek water, until God restored him to that which was wrongfully taken from him. He dwelled therefore in Beersheba for a time without water, unless he borrow or buy it: but afterwards he finds his well again, and so is at some better ease than before, and God suffers them not that would as it were have made them to die of thirst to use their malice and to come to their purpose. But however it be, God heard him not at the first dash. We have then to learn here, that which was touched yesterday: that is, that we learn to endure need, yea in the need of water, & that we think it not strange which our fathers have tried. For it is no reason that we should be more privileged than they. And if God spare us, that we acknowledge his goodness in this point: and if he afflict us in any other sort, that we be so much the more framed to patience. But yet it is said:

"That God appeared unto him, the very first night that he went to Beersheba."

Here we must note that which we have handled before in the life of Abraham: that is, that God appeared unto him, forasmuch as he had need to be aided & comforted, by reason of his great heavinesses and troubles, which he had suffered before. This circumstance then is worthy to be noted: and that is, that God seeing his servant to be afflicted even to extremity, he would give him some ease: as at this day, although we have no such visions, God nevertheless ceases not to show himself unto us, when he sees that we can bear no more, and that we were like to fail unless he reaches forth his helping hand to sustain us.

However often we are in distress, we think that God has estranged himself from us, and we imagine that he has utterly forgotten us. But contrariwise, when he makes us to taste his favor, in what sort soever it be, or rather that he strengthens us, & that we fight valiantly against all temptations, or rather that he delivers us from the wrongs and vexations that are done unto us, or that he does assist us as it were, after some visible manner: then lo, his presence, and then we see that he has care over us.

So let us note, that when God appeared to Isaac, that it must needs be that he had been in some great necessity: For this happened not every day: and thereupon let us learn to hold ourselves contented, when God after that he has suffered us to be tormented, to be disquieted, troubled, and molested, that in the end he shows himself to be father unto us. And if this fall not out so soon, let us wait upon him, as we see Isaac did, who had not always a certain sign that God would assist him: but contrariwise he then sees himself quite destitute of all succor, and that for a long time: and after one misery was come, behold another follows as thick as might be: and yet notwithstanding he quailed not.

And therefore let us follow that path. And in the meantime let us mark also that one only word which God shall speak unto us, to witness the love which he bears unto us, will be better worth unto us, than all the goods which we can have, yea if we had to eat and drink our fill, and that in all delicacy, though there were no man to trouble us, though we rest on every side. To be short, though we had all at our hearts' desire: If the world went thus with us, it is certain that we ought not to esteem so much of it, as to have this testimony, that God is merciful unto us.

For let us put the case, that a man did swim in all pleasures and had all the ease in the world and wanted nothing: yet notwithstanding, if he knows not, how it stands between God and him, if he have no doctrine, no promise, he shall be always as it were in doubt whether his ease will last or no: and if he become so drunken therewith, that he think that his prosperity shall yet continue with him, what may it be to have after this sort all his felicity in this world? How long endures this life?

So then all the blessings that may happen unto us are nothing, neither can they have any good savor, unless we be assured of the favor of God. But on the other side, when it pleases God to declare unto us that he loves us, and that we are in his protection, that we cannot perish, that he holds us by the hand, and that we are kept and guarded by him. This is it then that ought to content us, though all the rest did fail us. So then, however God gave some sign unto Isaac, that he had looked upon him in pity: this was nothing in comparison of that which Moses rehearses now, which was that God appeared unto him, to the end to continue his covenant towards him, and to ratify it so much the more, and that he was altogether resolved therein, in such sort that he was a buckler unto him, to break all temptations.

But we have here in the first place to note, that this was a vision to prepare Isaac, to the end that the word which must be given unto him, might be received with the greater reverence and authority.

Now this vision was as a sign that God spoke: and this has always been very necessary: For we know how the devil labors to seduce us by illusions and vain fantasies. When therefore the fathers were taught, to the end they might have a full assurance of their faith, the majesty of God manifested itself unto them, whereof they had some

infallible impression: For if the word only had come unto them, it had been as a sound in the air without all steadiness. This therefore is no superfluous thing, when Moses says, that God showed and declared himself unto Isaac: For it was necessary that Isaac should know and be thoroughly persuaded, that the word which he heard, proceeded from heaven, and that he might rest therein, that it was an undoubted truth, in which he could not be abused.

It is true that God is invisible, and cannot be comprehended: and so far is it off, that we can comprehend him with the eye, that if we do apply all our senses thereto, it is certain that we shall never attain to his high majesty: The Essence of God therefore, in that it is infinite, cannot be seen of men, but this lets not but that he may show himself so far forth as is expedient for us, and according to that small measure that is in us.

Thus as often as we read that God appeared unto the ancient Fathers, this shows not that they comprehended all his essence and majesty: For that had been a thing impossible: Man's spirit is very rude: but he so showed himself, as they were able to bear: that is to say, so far forth as he saw it to be profitable for them. Yea and if God should lay open his glory unto us, it would by and by overwhelm us: I say if we had a great deal more understanding than we have, and that our spirit could comprehend an hundred times more than it does: yet should we be so astonished at the glory of God, that we should therein be altogether confounded.

It behooves therefore that God have regard what we are able to bear, when it pleases him to appear unto us. And so let us mark, how the word which Moses uses here is to be taken, that is, that Isaac, to the end that he might be more assured of the promise which was made unto him, and that he might hold it as an authentic promise, and in

no wise doubt but that it was God that had spoken unto him, he had some sign and mark, whereby he felt that he could not be deceived, that it was no fancy or some light imagination: but that God would give him a sure hold to lean upon, that he would give him such a rest, as he might by the virtue of the word, which shall afterward be added, fight against whatever evil might happen unto him.

Now it is said, that God exhorted him, that he should not fear, and he gives him a reason why:

"I am," saith he, "with thee, yea I, the God of Abraham thy father."

When he says, "Fear not," we have expounded this already before, that God means not to exempt those to whom he speaks from all fear: For however the fathers were Conquerors against all the defiances, which could be made against them, yet were they not insensible. Abraham was tempted: but he was not overcome. Therefore we must remember this point, that they that became Conquerors through the power of the Spirit of God, fought notwithstanding.

Now what strife or combat can there be, unless there be some feeling of it? For if Abraham had not felt this in himself, "See I am in danger," he would never have called upon God, and he would never have had recourse unto him: if he had not been pressed with the griefs which he endured, he would not have made his requests and complaints unto God, to be eased & lightened of them. So then we may not think that God would have them to be without all feeling to whom he has said, "Fear not": but it was, to hold them so fast unto himself, that they should not be unmeasurably afraid as we use to be, unless we have our rest upon God: For the least blast of wind in the world is enough to shake us, and to make us so at our wits' end, that

we cannot tell which way to turn: as it is said of Ahas, that he was afraid, and shook as a leaf of a tree: and Isaiah to remedy this evil, says: Hush, hold thy peace before God. And this is the common style of the holy scripture. So then mark what this word imports, where it is said, "Fear not": that is to say, however we have occasion to fear, & to be astonished, yet let us resist, and wait with patience till God shall succor us: & let not this fear oppress us, & quite stifle us: but let us endeavor to recover ourselves & keep the right path. And albeit we be disquieted and tossed hither & thither, let us always remain fast upon our feet, seeing we are grounded upon the promise of God.

But it is said expressly: "I am with thee": to show that when we have God on our side, this ought to suffice us, though all the world mischievously practice our ruin, that look how many men, so many enemies there are: yea & that it seems that all creatures have conspired against us, notwithstanding so that God take our part, it shall make us to overcome all fear. And indeed we see how the Prophet David did practice this doctrine, and Saint Paul also gives us example thereof: "Seeing God (saith he) is for me, I will not fear though I were compassed about with an hundred thousand men: when I shall see all the deaths in the world, I will assure myself upon God's shepherd's crook." Lo how he speaks in the twenty-third Psalm, "O Lord thy hook, that is to say, the staff which thou erectest, as a shepherd, (For he taketh a similitude from the shepherd, who will have his staff or his hook to lead his sheep:) Lord (saith he) so that I may have some sign to assure me, that thou accomptest me one of thy flock, I will walk in the shadow of death, and yet I will comfort myself."

For I will account myself enough comforted, so that I may be grounded upon thy grace. And afterwards in another place, seeing that God is with me: I defy all those who shall come to assail me.

"What is that that flesh shall do unto me, so that God take my part?" says he. He scorns there the weakness of men, showing that God, blowing upon them, he can overthrow them all, and bring them to nothing: and notwithstanding if he be armed with strength from above, all the threats which the Devil shall be able to bend against him, shall be nothing. And this is what Saint Paul teaches us: If God be with us, who shall be against us? Not that we shall not have many things against us, albeit that God be the keeper of our life: but notwithstanding we may boast ourselves against all our enemies, and against all that the Devil shall devise against us, so that God be favorable unto us.

So, that it is not without cause that this word is couched in, to take away all fear, when he saith: I am with thee, Fear not therefore. Now altogether like as we are taught to rest ourselves upon the only goodness of God, and in his fatherly favor: so contrariwise we have to mark, that without it, we are always as a people that are even swooning. And this also is that we have touched erewhile: to wit, that if God do not testify unto us the love that he bears us, though we should be in an earthly paradise, we should be in a hell: and contrariwise, though we were in some hell, that is to say, in some gulf, so that we feel that God is merciful unto us, and that in the end he will take pity upon us, and that we be assured of his aid, a hell will always fall out to be a paradise. And this is the thing we have to observe in this place: That when a man knows not how it stands with him in respect of God, that is to say, he cannot assure himself that God bears a fatherly affection unto him: he must needs tremble, and be always shaken on every side, and have many pricks to vex and torment him, without knowing any cause why: and that very often, he shall be in great perplexity. Lo then in what case the unbelievers are: not that they are not bold enough, yea even to despise God: For it seems to them that they are escaped his hand, & that if he should

thunder from heaven, that he cannot touch them. The wicked then and those that are contemners of God will indeed be so far bold in their pride: but notwithstanding God gives them pricks within, so that they have, as a man would say, blind assaults, that they know not from whence they come: and nevertheless it is God that makes war against them with their own unbelief.

And this is the reward of all those, that rest not only in God, and know not that all our safety, all our joy and felicity is to be in his keeping. All they therefore that presume of their own strength and virtues, all they that so occupy their minds in these earthly creatures, they must in the end be paid home with their own foolish presumption, because they have not given unto God that honor that belongs unto him: that is, they must find themselves as poor swooning people. And therefore let us learn, albeit that God give us our desires and all the pleasures that are possible to be wished for, that we do not in such sort rest upon them, that we turn away from him: but rather let us learn too keep ourselves in that favor and testimony that we have, that in that he has adopted us for his children, he will always show himself a father towards us. When then we shall be thus thoroughly persuaded, it is certain that we shall overcome all fears: but contrariwise, when we shall imagine to be assured without the protection of God, it must needs be that he show us what our folly and overweening is. And this briefly is that we have to bear away in this place. And so let us join these two things together as inseparable and not to be sundered: That GOD is with us, and that we are well assured against all evil: For if he be far from us, Alas, we are more than miserable, albeit we were in a paradise, as I have said already: but when he is with us, though we walk in the shadow and darkness of death, and that it seems we must perish every minute of an hour, yet we leave not off to comfort ourselves, knowing well that death shall be turned to us into life, & that all shall

fall out to our salvation. Again, we have to note this, that he says, That he is the God of Abraham: For by this word he calls to Isaac's remembrance all the promises, the which he had learned of his father. If he had not been instructed, and that Abraham had not done his duty to say unto him: "My Son, GOD has given me this privilege above all men, that he has declared unto me and said unto me, that my stock shall be as his heritage, and that he will bless us, and we shall be separated and sanctified from all the rest of the world: but yet mark how it behooves us to worship him, mark how we must call upon him, See how we must serve him."

If therefore Abraham had not faithfully taught his son Isaac: this word should have been of no force: "I am the God of Abraham," and indeed it had imported nothing but superstition. And so, let us mark well that by this word, God would give a confirmation to Isaac of that which he had learned before of his father. The Papists make a buckler of this when they will keep themselves to their filthinesses & errors: For they have that from other fathers & ancestors which they follow, they have not invented it at this day: it seemeth therefore unto them, that this is enough to beat back, yea even whatsoever god himself hath showed by his word so that they follow their fathers & elders. Well, but when god is named the God of Abraham, he presupposed this one thing, to wit, that Abraham had a faith ruled by the doctrine, which had been taught him. And wherefore is it that he nameth not himself, the god of Nachor? And why is it that he calleth not himself the God of Thare?

For this had been somewhat more. The Papists will not say, "It is an hundred years since that which we call the service of God amongst us, was used amongst men:" but they will say: "What? There is a thousand years, since the world was so governed." Lo then

themselves in possession to despite God, as seemeth unto them, when they allege a thousand years.

Now then if the question were simply of Antiquity, he must have said, "I am thy god of Thare and of Nachor," or rather he must have gone further, until he had come to those that went before. But there is no question of speaking in that sort. God had called Abraham, and Abraham was dead of late, the others had been a great deal more ancient: what distinction shall we make here? we must not forge it according to our own brain: but we must look unto that mark, whereunto God would direct Isaac: There is no doubt but this was, because Abraham (as we have said already,) had a full certainty of faith, that he had not an opinion only as had the rest of the world, to say, "I imagine so, I think so," but he was fully certified that God had spoken unto him. Lo then in what respect and for what cause it is now said, "I am the God of Abraham, thy father." And so, let us well mark what fathers we ought to follow, that we be not deceived therein. For if our fathers had been duly taught, and that they had been framed unto the truth of God, it had now been a good help unto our faith: For when we have guides to show us the way, this is much to our advantage, and we ought not to despise it: but if we have had fathers who were not the children of God, (whereupon all paternity and parentage dependeth, as Saint Paul saith) then must we shut our eyes.

For when God hath not his sovereign decree of being the father, and everything be not referred to him, then woe upon all parentages and bonds which we shall have in this world: for they are so many nets of Satan. So, let us mark well that as it is said in this place, that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac's father: so it is said on the contrary by the Prophet Ezekiel: "Walk not in the righteousness of your fathers."

And why so? These fathers followed not Abraham's steps, but departed therefrom: and therefore they were no longer worthy of so honorable a title of fathers, forasmuch as they were not (at a very word) the children of God. And so let us fear, lest that be spoken unto us (that Saint Stephen has spoken,) "Ye uncircumcised of heart, ye have always resisted God and his holy spirit, as did your fathers also." But if there were any ignorance or rebellion in our fathers, let us forsake it, to the end wholly to resign ourselves to our heavenly father: and notwithstanding, whereas the Papists cry, "The fathers, fathers," let us learn to discern, and let us not be beasts as they are, to take our fathers from some stews: as they take all those for their fathers, who have perverted and corrupted the simplicity both of the Law and the Gospel: to wit, these dotards and rabble of Friars and Monks, who have been the falsifiers of the holy Scripture. To the end therefore we be not in such wise bereaved and spoiled of our senses, let us know that our fathers must be the children of God, of whom dependeth all parentage, as we have alleged out of Saint Paul. Lo then shortly what we have to learn out of this place: that is to say, that Isaac was admonished, to acknowledge and call to his remembrance, whatsoever he had learned before, and that this was for to confirm his faith, when God said, that he had manifested himself unto his father Abraham. And now at this day we have to put this doctrine in practice, as often as we shall have need to assure ourselves, or rather when our spirit is troubled, and we tossed with some wavering and uncertainty, we must have our recourse thither: That is to follow our father Abraham, to conform ourselves to follow that rule, which he has showed unto us. And why so? For we are certain, that God was manifested unto him.

Lo then a good direction, and which shall not turn us out of the path of our salvation: when we shall be conformed and fashioned to our father Abraham, who was adopted of God, and who received the

pledge of our salvation: that is to say, all these promises whereupon we ought at this day to be grounded. And such account ought we to make of all the rest of the faithful. For although they no whit appertain unto us, concerning the flesh, yet notwithstanding we cease not to be their children. And therefore it is not without cause that the Apostle in the eleventh Chapter to the Hebrews sets before us, this thick cloud of witnesses, when as he would show us, that we are very unkind, if we follow not those, whom God has set forth unto us for an example. Lo (saith he) a great and thick cloud of witnesses who calls us to God, that would seem, (as if a man would say) to stop up our eyes. We will be offended with a man, when he shall seduce us, we will imagine to be excused by saying, "O, he did therein as much as I:" we need no more but a small fly to make us to turn away from the fear of God and his obedience: and notwithstanding that God shall set before us so many witnesses, to prove our faith, that we ought therewith be satisfied, yet we come not to him. And if this profit us nothing, and we be not confirmed thereby, what is the cause thereof, but our own unthankfulness? And so then, so often as our faith shall be weak, that we shall have overthings of ignorance, as it were storms, let us think, "And what? hath God begun but yesterday and today to speak? Spake he not unto Abraham? And was not his truth certain from that time forward? and besides all the faithful which came afterwards, all the holy kings & prophets, and others, are they not so many witnesses, whom God showed unto us? Let us therefore join them to this holy assembly now."

For however often the Gospel has been preached to us (as the Apostle has discussed), its purpose is not only to gather us together with all the faithful who are living today, but also into the fellowship and company of all the holy spirits whom God has taken out of this world. Therefore, we are at this day joined in fellowship with all the holy Patriarchs and Prophets, as often as God speaks to us. But we

shall be so much the more without excuse because we know not how to make our profit of all this: seeing that God has yet revealed it more clearly to us, and in a more familiar manner in the person of his only begotten Son. For he is not only named at this day the God of Abraham, but also the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Inasmuch, therefore, as we have the full and perfect revelation of whatever is profitable to us for our salvation in this lively image in whom God is set forth: it is certain that we have no color, that we can allege, why we should not have such a certainty of faith, that we should never stray hither and thither: and when the world changes itself an hundred thousand times, yet nevertheless, that we should remain steadfast in what we have received of God, knowing that his truth is unchangeable. This, therefore, shortly is that which we have to bear away concerning this text.

And further, let us likewise note that word of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he says: "I go to my God and to your God, to my Father and to your Father." See the Son of God, who is the everlasting God, nevertheless, to the end to gather us unto himself, & to keep us sure there, in such sort that we should never be seduced from that foundation which he has given unto us of his truth, he says, that we have one God together with him, inasmuch as he is man, and in that he is our brother: that we have the same God who is his God, and the same father who is his father. When we hear these things, is there any farther cause for us to doubt, or to be shaken? As there are many who will say at this day: "O, I know not what to hold: there are so many sundry opinions, that I am confounded: & likewise I can believe nothing, I know not what to follow." But it cannot be chosen but that such people are possessed of the Devil, when they tread under their feet the truth of God, which is as a most undoubted light to guide us, and to show us the way of salvation. So then, seeing God has showed himself since Abraham and Noah, and appointed Moses

to be the conductor of his Church, and that he has knit us altogether, when in the end he sent his only begotten Son, in whose person he has gathered us all to himself: let us learn to keep ourselves in that unity of faith which he has given us, and let us not doubt, but that he will always avow us for his children. Now we have to note that which God says, "That he will bless Isaac and will multiply his seed." For this serves to show that the favor which God bears to those whom he has called to himself, is not vain nor idle: but that it brings forth its fruit and effect in time. It is therefore very certain, that when God shall be merciful unto us, he will give us so many good things, as he knows to be good for us: it is true that this shall not be according to our desire, but however it be, prosperity shall always be coupled with the favor & love of God. Now we know that he has all in his hand, and he is no niggard, that he will not give to his children whatsoever he knows to be meet for them. Let us learn therefore to wait for all prosperity, and free favor of our God, when it shall please him to testify unto us that he loves us, and that he is with us (as I have said already:) and in the meantime, notwithstanding, although that we have many adversities, which trouble & molest us, and that they be hard & bitter unto us, yet let us never give over to hold us fast unto his promise. And when we receive any grace from the hand of God, let us apply the same always, to strengthen our faith, and to have this undoubted persuasion, that we shall try that to be true which is spoken here: "I will be with thee, and I will bless thee." And certain it is, that if we would consider well the benefits of God, that we daily receive from him, and that they were valued of us as they ought, we should always have good cause to honor him & to rejoice ourselves in him: but alas, we devour up the benefits that he bestows upon us: & in the meantime, we mow at them & never think upon them. And we may see, that this is the cause that we are so given to murmur, to fret & to discontent ourselves. And why so? For the benefits of God ought to suffice to satisfy us in him: but (as I have said) we despise & set

light by them. And so we are not worthy to taste, what this promise is worth: "I am with thee, and will bless thee." Now it is said a little after:

That Isaac erected an altar, and that he called upon the name of the Lord in that place.

We have seen already why altars were erected by the holy fathers, and to what intent: but yet we must here speak somewhat of it, even as the place requires. The altar which Isaac erected was to this end, that he might make profession of his faith. Thus much concerning the first point. For if we pray unto God, we have no need to erect an altar unto him: the service of God is, of itself, spiritual. Isaac therefore erected not an altar that he might only invoke and call upon the name of God, or make his prayers and supplications unto him: but to the intent that his faith might be known, and that God might be glorified before men. For although we ought to serve God in spirit, and inwardly in our heart: yet notwithstanding this let's not also, but that we must give him that praise which he deserves before men, and that we protest as much as lies in us, that we are wholly his, both body and soul.

Here therefore we are instructed, that the faithful after they have put their trust in God, and shall have called upon him, and given unto him the praise of all his benefits must yet further make a confession of their faith before men, to the intent they may wholly (as also all is his) dedicate themselves to him. There is also a second reason: And that is that by reason of our sloth and slackness, we have need every manner of way to be pricked forwards, to the end to stir us up, to march cheerfully forwards in the service of God. How so? It is true, that when we pray unto God, he busies himself with no ceremonies: and yet for all that, we bow our knees, we hold up our hands towards

heaven, and uncover our head. And why so? First of all, in respect of men. For (as I have already said) it must needs be that we do homage unto God with our bodies, which he has created, and which he has appointed to his glory, and to the crown of immortality. But, however it be, for as much as we are slack, it behooves us that these means stand us in stead to provoke us to have a more fervent zeal to pray unto God, and with a more hearty affection. Lo then, why it is meet for us to have our joined hands lifted up, to kneel upon our knees, and have our head uncovered: For it is to show, that we present ourselves before God as if we should say: "And poor wretch, who art thou? with what lowliness ought thou to come before him, who hath created and fashioned thee, and to whom thou hast to render an account of thy whole life?"

And again, this also is to this end, that we should bereave ourselves of all vain fantasies that make us to stray here and there: and that we should wholly rest upon him. So then, the Altar that Isaac erected served to this purpose: to wit, that by this means he might be the more provoked, and have his heart so much the more inflamed to serve God. And on the other side, he made a confession before men, to give example to his family, and to testify that he mingled not himself with the superstitions of the Pagans: but had a pure and undefiled religion, inasmuch as he was ruled by his word. And thus much concerning the Altar. And by the way, we have also to learn here this thing which was declared before, that the prayers of the holy fathers, and the confession which they made of their faith, was not joined with the sacrifices, for no other end but to lead them unto our Lord Jesus Christ: For they were continually taught, that they could have no access unto God, but by the favor of a mediator, who was not yet sent into the world: but yet so it is that they rested there.

But now that our Lord Jesus Christ is come down, and that he hath taken our nature upon him, and hath said unto us, That he is the light of the world, that he is the way, the truth, and the life, that he is our advocate to God his father, and that through him we must have entrance into Heaven: Seeing therefore we have all this, must we not be so much the more assured, when there is any question of calling upon him, that we know that our requests shall be heard of him, and the gate shall be open for us, and that we shall always find him ready and favorable to help and succor us? Now however it be, let us mark that Altars in old time, and specially in the time of the law, were always erected to this end, that the faithful might know that they were not worthy to pray unto God, nor to call upon him in their own name: but that always they must come to him by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the virtue of that sacrifice which he must offer up to his father, for the reconciliation of the world. And indeed we must not think that Abraham and Isaac devised Altars according to their own fantasies: For their sacrifices were never acceptable but through faith as the Apostle shows. Now they could never have been grounded in Faith, unless the word of God had gone before to enlighten them. Let us know then, that Isaac offered not up a sacrifice, at all adventures, as if he had thought, "Oh, this shall be found good": but he was taught, that he being a wretched sinner, he must not presume to call upon the name of God, unless he put his whole trust in him, who must be sent to make satisfaction and to purge the sins of the world. The Pagans had indeed their Altars, and sacrificed, as did the holy fathers: but they wanted the principal. They were wholly occupied in the ceremony, which of itself was frivolous: because they looked not up to that heavenly pattern, whereof mention is made in Leviticus.

So then we have to learn, that when our father Isaac would call upon the name of God, he had an Altar to witness that he could not be

received but in the name and favor of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore at this day, as often as we will pray unto God, let us learn to wash our Prayers with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: for otherwise they shall be but profane and defiled: but when the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be applied therein, certainly our Prayers shall be pure, they shall be consecrated, in such sort, that God will accept of them. And when we shall call upon God, everyone in the secret of his own heart, let us labor also to draw our neighbors thereto, to the intent that he may be glorified in the midst of us with one accord. And as we ought to be knit together in one Faith, so also let us have but one mouth to protest that we hold him for our father and Savior, and that we are wholly his.

But now we will fall down before the majesty of our good God, in the acknowledgement of our faults, praying that it will please him, in such sort to make us feel them, that it may be to make us to be displeased with ourselves for them, and to make us to lament before his judgment seat, to the intent we may be absolved through his mercy: forasmuch as we should justly be condemned by his judgment. And that it will please him to strengthen us, so as we faint not, whatever miseries we have to suffer in this world: but we may meditate in his word in such sort, that the only promise which he hath given unto us, to hold us for his children, may content us, and that we may be armed therewith to the end to submit ourselves to his will peaceably to bear all afflictions that he shall send us: and that we may glorify him also in our hearts, without any feigning or hypocrisy: and that we may labor also to show the fruits of our faith before men, and that by this means he may be honored of all, both of small and great. And that he will not only show us this grace, but also to all peoples and nations of the Earth, etc.

## **The Tenth Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 26.**

26 Now Abimelech coming unto him to Gerar, with Ahuzzath his friend, and Phicol the Captain of his host:

27 Isaac says unto them, "Why came you unto me, seeing you hated me, and have sent me away from you?"

28 They said unto him, "We saw for assurance that Jehovah was with thee, therefore we said: Let there be an oath between us, that is, between us and thee, Let us therefore strike a covenant with thee.

29 Ask vengeance upon thyself, if thou shalt hurt us, like as we have not touched thee, and like as we have done thee good, and have sent thee away with peace: Do thou consent now, thou blessed of the Lord."

30 When therefore he had made them a feast, they did eat and drink. And rising in the morning, they swore to each other: And Isaac led them forth, and they went from him with peace.

31 And it came to pass that the self-same day, Isaac's servants coming unto him, showed him concerning that well which they had dug, and said unto him, "We have found waters."

32 And he called the same Shibah; therefore the name of the City is Beer-sheba even until this day.

## Chapter 27,

1. Now when Esau was forty years old, he married a wife named Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.

2 Who were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebecca.

However, men living in this world are subject to many miseries and afflictions, yet nevertheless the most part of the evils that they endure, proceed from themselves, every one of them being as a wolf to his companion. We are compassed about with savage beasts, who are altogether our enemies: there is neither Heaven nor earth, nor other elements, that do not bring with them a thousand hurts. We know not how to go upon the water, but we must be, within half a foot of our death: There needs but one torment to swallow up a people: The earth also has many annoyances, as if God had threatened us on every side. But when we shall make comparison, there are no wild beasts, nor heaven, nor earth, nor anything whatsoever, which so much annoys men, as each one annoys his neighbor. Now for this cause we ought to think it a singular benefit of God bestowed upon us when he gives us peace and that we are not oppressed and wronged on every side, when no mischief is devised against us, no hurt nor damage done unto us: It must needs be that the protection of God has a hand in it, seeing that every man will always be as a wolf unto his neighbors, as we have said.

And this is the mark whereunto this present story tendeth: For Moses would show that after God had appeared to Isaac, he yet farther declares his favor unto him, in that the King of Gerar came

unto him, and sought his amity and friendship, and hereby was Isaac honored, and specially it was unto him a great advantage, because he might always have been in doubt, inasmuch as he had been greatly envied in the country, and had been constrained to depart from thence, notwithstanding he had lived amongst them, in all humanity and courtesy. He might therefore have been always in great suspense, fearing the rage of his neighbors. But God made them to come unto him of their own accord, and not only to show themselves friends: but they flatter him, and fear that he will hurt them, and therefore they demand a covenant to be made between them with a solemn oath.

Now we have to note here first of all, that God has the hearts of men in his own hand to mollify their hardness when it pleases him, and to abate all their rage, and to turn them to courtesy and kindness: for certainly the king of Gerar had not changed his nature when he came to Isaac: and on the other side if he feared Isaac, he might have conspired with his subjects and neighbors, and so have set upon him altogether. On the other side, he had given no occasion to doubt of him, inasmuch as Isaac had not given him any argument of distrusting him: he rather had behaved himself in such sort, that he plainly declared that he desired not to grieve any, no not so much as his presence: For we have seen how he departed from their company.

It must needs be therefore that God stirred up these profane people, to cause them to come unto Isaac, and to submit themselves, as they do with such humility, that they entreat a poor man, a stranger, who had no great credit amongst them, nor had any but his own family, which he kept apart, without giving any token of attempting any such matter. Before God had laid the bridle in their neck, but this was to prove the patience of his servant. For when he was denied water, and that in the end it was said unto him, that he was stronger than they,

and that he could be no longer suffered, there is no doubt but that God then exercised him to the end he might try what patience there was in him. And so Isaac knew, that if it had pleased God to give him peaceable dwelling in that Country where he was, that he should not have been driven thence: but inasmuch as he saw men perk up against him, he knew that it was as a passport from God for him to depart.

Now on the contrary, we must also note that God moved them suddenly to come towards Isaac, and to appease and abolish all enmities and quarrels, which might yet be moved either on the one side or on the other. Let us mark well then, when any outrage is done against us, and there, where we shall have endeavored to do pleasure and service to everyone, that we shall be wonderfully pricked and tormented, that this should be done by God's appointment, who wills us to strive, not in doing evil, or requiting evil for evil, but by possessing our souls in patience, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has thereto exhorted us. And likewise on the contrary, when we shall see men to be favorable unto us, and to intend no evil quarrel, or riot against us, let us know that God has pity upon us, and that he governs his creatures, and directs them to such purpose as he sees good. And likewise let us beseech God, as often as our enemies shall use any cruelty against us, and that we cannot win them by any means, nor by any moderation that we can use, that it will please him to put to his hand, knowing that he can turn when it shall please him, those that are wolves into sheep. This is what we have to learn first of all by this History.

But it is said that Isaac at their first coming spoke bluntly enough on this wise:

"Why are you come unto me? seeing you hated me, and drove me out from amongst you?"

We shall see by the sequel of the matter, that Isaac nourished no spite nor bitterness, nor any desire of revengement in his heart: For he was quickly appeased: and when he upbraided Abimelech and all his company, that they had hated and persecuted him: it was not in manner of any injury, so as we are accustomed to do. For if any spite be done unto us, or any wrong, we sharpen our tongues to speak evil and to slander: there is nothing but hatreds, contentions and wranglings: to be short, if we could tear them in pieces, that have hurt us, we would willingly do it.

And this is what Solomon says: That hatred discloses reproaches, faults and injuries. When the hearts then are thus set on fire, it is not possible but that the tongues also must overflow to outrage one against the other. But Isaac took no such course: but we have to note, that whenever we shall be patient, that this lets not, but that we use our liberty, to show them that have faulted, the wrong that they have done unto us, and so make them to understand their offense: to the end all may profit them.

It is true that in this case we must thoroughly examine our affection: for it is a very hard and rare thing that a man who shall have been provoked and offended, that he should not be moved with some passion, and so always pursue his own particular cause. And therefore I have said that we must enter into ourselves, and diligently mark, if we be not moved with some desire of revenge, or tainted with some hatred or rancor: when we shall have thoroughly known this, and find ourselves clear, then we may have an open mouth to show them their offense, that shall have wronged us, not to be

revenged in condemning of them: but to the end that they flatter not themselves in their sins, as this is a very common evil amongst men.

Lo, then, a point which we have diligently to mark: that is, that the patience of the faithful is not without all touch of any passion, neither is it against this, that we frankly show them: "you have done me wrong, and you have offended GOD, and you have had no occasion to do so:" and yet: that they always have special regard unto the salvation of those, who have persecuted them, and have been their enemies. For this that Isaac nipped them withal was undoubtedly as an admonition, whereby he sought the good and salvation of them, to whom he spoke so bluntly: For if he had dissembled it, what profit might come to him thereby? The others would have thought it deep hypocrisy if he had made show to have been contented and well pleased with them, and that he had nothing but honey in his mouth, and have said: "Lo, it is even so:" Abimelech knowing himself to be faulty would have thought, "See, a double man and a liar." Lo, what they gain that dissemble so much, and set such a fair countenance upon it. So then, although the Children of God be patient, and that they be always ready to forgive all wrongs committed against them, and have not any manner of ways cankered hearts against their enemies, yet they cease not oftentimes to say, "See wherein you have done me wrong:" and this is to show that they walk in all roundness and simplicity. And this end ought always to be kept: that is to say, when we shall be grieved, or any wrong or extortion shall be done unto us, that yet we procure always the good of our enemies, and that the reproaches and accusations that we make unto them, be so many advertisements or warnings to draw them to the right way, and to touch them: to the intent they be not hardened and made obstinate, and that they may be better advised in time to come, and that they fight not against God, thinking they have

to do with men: as it is very likely that Isaac did here, who would likewise provide for the time to come.

For this shall be very lawful for us, when we shall have suffered any wrong, to do as much as lies in us, to rid ourselves from it. For although our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to be ready, when we shall have received one blow upon the one cheek to turn the other: Yet it means not that we should go and provoke our enemies, and give them occasion to vex us. We ought to avoid this as much as is possible for us: and by all good and loving means we ought to stop their malice who have no fear of God in them. Isaac then had respect to himself in this case: But it was not to the end to be avenged, nor to render like for like: He only contented himself to have set a bar against all those which had treated him evil and dealt unjustly with him beforetime: to the end they might be stayed, and might surcease from such wrongs.

This briefly is what we have to learn out of this place. And this rule is very necessary: For oftentimes when men are reconciled one to the other, they must be silent and then there shall need none other means: and he yet who shall have sustained the greatest wrong, he shall have more liberty and more boldness to justify himself against them that would make us believe that the Lamb has troubled the water. Let us mark well therefore, that when any shall have done wrong to his neighbor, if he come not to pursue his particular quarrels so stoutly, that he rest thereupon, that it shall be good that each one be advertised, and that he which has done the wrong, notwithstanding know it, confess it, and be humbled in it: but we see that this greatly profited not: so far off was it that Isaac pursued not the matter to the uttermost, although he saw that his admonition was not received, and that it touched not their hearts, to whom he had spoken: however it was, he dealt not spitefully against them.

Notwithstanding mark Abimelech who says:

"Like as we have been friendly unto thee, and have done thee no hurt, so swear unto us that thou wilt attempt nothing against us."

Abimelech not only hides the evil which he has committed, and would excuse it: but he boasts that he has done his duty wonderfully well towards Isaac: and this is the common manner, as we have said: For there is nothing more hard for a man than to condemn himself: although he feels himself faulty. Men will be drawn sooner to anything than to this lowliness, which yet notwithstanding is a token necessarily required to true repentance. For if a man feel that he have faulted, and have true repentance, he must needs confess himself guilty before God, and likewise towards his neighbor, when it shall be requisite.

And therefore our Savior Christ also exhorts us, that if we have any quarrel against our neighbors, that is to say, if we have offended them, that rather we should leave our sacrifices at the altar, to the end to seek agreement, than to flatter ourselves, and to harden our hearts, despising those to whom we are bound. Now he speaks of that time of the sacrifices: but that was as much as if he should have said, that we cannot pray unto God, nor do anything that shall be acceptable unto him, as long as we disdain to repair the faults which we have committed.

Now although God commands us never so strictly to humble ourselves, when we have offended, yet can none attain unto this way: and that is here sufficiently taught us in the person of Abimelech and of his companions. For men are so blinded both with self-love, pride, and arrogance, that they can not in any case be brought to this, to say: "I have offended": for they are always ashamed to confess their fault: and yet notwithstanding are not ashamed to be condemned

before God and his Angels: and yet when they have remorse in themselves, they must condemn themselves in spite of their teeth.

They can trimly trace out all the ways that can be to maintain their corruption, they have their goodly starting holes, to uphold themselves in their mischievous cause: but when they shall have won both great and small, whether it be through corruption or favor, or by any other means, and all the world stand for them, yet must they in the end come to the judgment of their own conscience which they cannot abide: and as I have said, there they shall find themselves to have gotten nothing by all their fetches and starting holes.

For maugre their beards will they, nill they, they must feel themselves guilty before God. Now when this is set before us, it is not to the end that we should sleep in any such vice: but to the intent, that we knowing ourselves to be subject unto it, should the rather seek for remedy. When Moses says, therefore, that Abimelech made as if he had well acquitted himself towards Isaac (and we know the contrary by that which has been rehearsed) it was not only to show that Abimelech was a hypocrite & a double man: but it was also to set a looking glass before our eyes, to the end we might know that there is not any one amongst us, which is not inclined to flatter himself, and who is not bent to bolster out an ill cause: although he were sufficiently convinced to have offended, that yet nevertheless pride would not suffer us to submit ourselves.

Lo then Moses' purpose and drift. So then, what have we to do? that every one gauge and sound himself to the bottom to find what is in him: and after we have duly examined ourselves, we shall find that there is not any one of us that would not hide his faults, and that would not wrong his adversary, when we have any quarrel: and hereupon it is that we seek out goodly colors to excuse ourselves, and

starting holes & delays: & turn (as they say) black to white, and white into black, that we might justify ourselves. Seeing therefore that we are subject to such an evil, let us fight against it. For it is not enough for us to feel our vice, but we must forsake it, & in forsaking it, we must yet resist it, albeit we can not altogether get the upper hand of it. And when we shall come to put this in practice, & shall have offended this man here, and that man there, let us not look upon men to blear our eyes: but let every man withdraw himself into his own secret, & say, Go to, what can I do now? It is true that I might justly do wrong unto mine adversary: for he has offended me thus & thus: but notwithstanding am I innocent before God & his Angels? It is meet that I begin to judge myself. For although that I be a poor blind wretch, yet for all that I feel in myself that I have offended, & I cannot lie unto myself: & in the meantime will God be deceived? When I have cunningly dissembled, will not he find out the least drop for all that.

So then there is no other mean to be absolved and released before God, but this, that I condemn myself. Mark then, I say, how we ought to practice this doctrine, and to apply it to our use and commodity. And to be short, howsoever we offend, let us note that repentance contains in it confession, not to go and whisper in the ear of a Priest, as was done in the Papacy: but a confession to give glory to God, and likewise to make amends for the fault which was committed against our neighbors. And therefore, they who committed any wrong or outrage against another, it behooved them to labor the amendment thereof, in humbling themselves, and howsoever it was not to be ashamed to say, I have offended you: I pray you forgive me. For mark also how we shall obtain favor and forgiveness before God, and by what means those wrongs we have done to our neighbors shall not cry out for vengeance against us: For undoubtedly, although they to whom we have done the wrong, content themselves, and think no

more of it, yet the evil shall be enrolled before God, & cry more loud before his majesty, than if all men were armed and set themselves against us. So then, to the end our faults may be blotted out & defaced before God, & that there be no cry that may hasten the Lord to judgment against us, by reason of the offenses that we have committed, let us learn in such sort to appease all strifes & quarrels that every one may prevent it by humbling himself with an upright & pure confession. This is that we have to mark upon this point.

Now on the other side, we see as I have already touched, that Isaac had not as a man would say, a heart puffed up, neither that nourished any manner of rancor against such as had been his enemies: for he pursued them not, he had indeed special cause against Abimelech and his company: For as Saint Paul says, they which are not of the flock & body of the church, we cannot judge them, to the end to bring them to repentance, as we may those which make profession of Christianity, who ought out of hand (as much as lies in them) to receive admonition of their faults. For this is the order which God has set among all those that are his, that we should be subject to receive admonition both from great and small.

So that there is, as it were, a mutual jurisdiction without the sword, and without authority, if we do our duty. For everyone having the word of God in his mouth is as a judge, to show his neighbor the faults which he has committed. He shall be a judge in one respect & he shall suffer himself to be judged in another. Mark then, how we judge those that are of the household, as Saint Paul says, that is to say, such as are of our body, and of the Religion of the faithful, and of the children of God. But those that are without, although we condemn them, yet cannot we call them so familiarly, to say, "Thou hast offended." For they have no such acquaintance with us, and

there is no such mutual right, as there is amongst the members of the body of the church.

And this is the cause why Isaac deals not so earnestly with Abimelech and his people, as if they had been knit together in one faith, & worshipped the same God, and had been of one Church, and had had one and the self-same order established among them. It is very likely that Isaac would not have passed this over to have said unto him: "What? Come you hither with your braggings, making as though you were my good friends, and had used nothing but courtesy towards me? And what courtesy was that to deny me water, yea and to dam up the wells that I had dug by mine own labor and the sweat of those that were mine? And this could bring you no loss or hindrance: and yet through malice you have gone about to put out mine eyes: and in the end you have driven me out and have not suffered me to dwell amongst you. And what friendship was this?" Isaac therefore might have stood to have maintained his cause, if Abimelech had been capable to have received such reproof: but it was enough for him freely to have laid open his affection. For seeing Abimelech would not be corrected, neither had any such repentance as was requisite for him: thereupon he leaves him.

So then, when we shall have labored to bring those to repentance that have offended, if we see them obstinate, we can no further press or urge them. It is true that if they be members of the Church, we must follow them, to the end they continue not obstinate, and if they will not endeavor to open themselves, and that we see they will not be displeased with their faults, that yet nevertheless we hold them as vanquished. For mark how it behooves us to handle them who are so wild and hard-hearted. "My friend, now thou showest thy impudence: before I well perceived that thou wast strayed out of the right path: but now I see that thou art altogether desperate and

without hope: For thou dost manifestly despise God. And what gettest thou either in this or in that? For thine offence is well known." And thus we may very well beat them down, who imagine through toughness & stubbornness to win their cause. But if we have to do with those, which have no acquaintance with us, and are not our brethren, let it suffice us to have shown them the truth in one word: For this shall be dearly enough bought of them, if they think not better upon it to humble themselves.

And for our part when we shall be reprov'd for any offence, let us not wait for any long process and such great inquests to be convinced as it were by fine force of many witnesses: but let us receive correction patiently as soon as it shall be offered us, & not be like to those that throw up a handful of ashes, to take away the clear light: let us therefore confess our faults: for this is the only remedy, except we will resist God: & let us know that when any warning or admonition shall be given that then God would have his grace felt of us, and that he is careful to draw us back, to the end we should not perish, that we should not remain obstinate, and that Satan should not take possession of us.

Let us know this, to the end we may come to repentance and true lowliness. Now Isaac shows yet better, that he keeps no mind of revenge or enmity, although they had offended him: For he prepares a banquet, and they eat and drink together. Lo here a point which we have well to meditate upon. For this also shows, how that we must fight against our passions, all the time of our life: so that this is as it were the ABC of Christians, not to requite evil for evil: but contrariwise to render good for evil, and to get the victory in this matter: which cannot enter into our fancy. This I say, is as it were our ABC: and there is no such perfection in us, but that we should begin here: That so soon as we desire and have a will to serve God, it

behooves that we be spoiled of all bitterness, hatred & rancor, of all desire to revenge, not only to forgive our enemies without procuring of their hurt: but also that we be ready to do them good. But now who is he that discharges himself herein of the hundredth part? But we shall find, albeit it seems that many are (as they say) petty Angels, and have nothing but a fervent desire to serve God, & to honor him, yea & there is nothing in them but love, & they are therein resolute & settled: yet as soon as they be provoked, the poison so breaks forth and afterwards dwells so long in them, that they keep the remembrance of some small offence, in their hearts all the time of their life.

When we see therefore that we can not be purged at the first day, nor the first year, of this cursed affection of revenge, so much the more we must apply this remedy, to the end we may be ordered and governed by the spirit of God: not to remain asleep in enmities & rancors: but willingly to forgive them, and to be thoroughly patient in all things. And so, we shall have well profited all the time of our life, when we shall have learned, to what use this history of Isaac is rehearsed unto us: that is, that he prepared a banquet for his enemies, not in a ceremony, or for fashion sake only, but to show that he was pure & clean from all malice, and that he had forgotten and buried all the offences, whereat they might pick any quarrels. Now it is said a little after:

"That they made a Covenant together, and swore each to other."

It is true that Isaac had the hurt, when the other demanded of him, that he would promise & swear unto them not to wrong them nor hurt them: For they had had sufficient proof, that they had not found him a violent man, nor one given to do any harm. Wherefore come they then to disquiet him farther? He might have put all this back:

but he yields something of his right: as when we would purchase peace amongst men, we must always have this mean, not to give it them wholly, who have done us wrong: but for all that, not too extremely too challenge and hold whatsoever belongs unto us, without yielding unto them one crumb thereof. For if every man should be so given to his own particular right, men could never be united and knit together: and although they were, they could never cease from day to day to have new occasions to devour and eat up one another. There is therefore but one way to nourish peace and concord: and that is, that no man seek that which is his own: as also Saint Paul makes mention thereof, speaking unto us of Charity, 1 Corinthians 13. Chapter, where he says expressly, That Charity has this property, Not to seek her own.

And further, when he exhorts us to live peaceably, and that we should love brotherly fellowship, and that none of us should give himself to ambition, nor have a desire to be more, greater, and higher, and to have the upper hand: For the word which he uses, means, there should be no desire of superiority or having the upper hand. Now, as long as we shall have this desire (as I have said,) Lo as it were a fire blown up and kindled: there are a thousand ways which Satan will find to set us at such discord, at war, dissension, & such contention, that it should seem we would overthrow all. So, let us mark well, to the end that we may dwell in friendship & brotherly concord with our neighbours, it behooves every one that he forsake and yield of his own right, and that every one keep not this extremity, to say, I will keep whatsoever is mine, & will pursue it, and forgo nothing by no manner of means whatsoever. When we shall deal thus, certainly the Devil will always find some cunning, to kindle the fire of discord and strife of words, & in the end of war. This therefore is that which we have to learn concerning this text. B

ut here by the way we see that it is lawful for the children of God to enter into league & friendship with heathen people, and such as profess nothing but false religion: as long as it is not to join ourselves with them, not to draw in the same yoke. For we must mark well, that admonition of Paul, who says: Take heed that you draw not in the yoke together with unbelievers: For he speaks this by way of comparison, as if two oxen were coupled together, to draw in one yoke, they must one answer the other: & though they be wild & sometimes straggle, yet being tied together by the necks with the yoke, they must follow the same train. Saint Paul would show us, that we must not be coupled with unbelievers, in such sort, that we be holden with their chains, and that we be so entangled with them, that we consent unto evil, neither in any respect to be tied therein: but only for to nourish peace, to stop outrages and violences, it shall always be lawful for us to enter into league with them.

Let us take heed therefore that we be separated from all their malice, and therein that we have no acquaintance with them, & especially that we condemn their iniquity as much as lies in us, so as we be not so much as companions and brethren with the wicked, no not complices: as it is said, especially in the 15th Psalm, that we must hate them. But nevertheless, to stop their rage, and to take away all occasion of hurt, and to shut the door against them, to the end they put not in practice their lewd enterprises, we may well meet with their evil by making league with them, to the end they may not flow to all licentiousness of evil, when we shall have put such a bar first before them. Yea we see that God has showed us this favour and grace, that we should take his name to witness, to the end we might be assured either of other: whereby he shows, how acceptable a thing Concord amongst men is unto him, & in what detestation he has all quarrels, wars, wrongs, hurts, outrages and oppressions, which men shall do each unto other. For this is no small matter, that God gives

his own name so to be used, and as it were, pawns it. And when a Prince must give some of his children for hostage, he will do it with great difficulty and much ado: but our Lord gives his own Name for hostage, when there is cause of nourishing peace amongst us, yea and when the matter stands so, that Concord must be had with infidels, to the end they may leave off to rage against us, and not hurt us.

Seeing then God has vouchsafed to lend his own Name to this purpose, so much the more ought we to be bent, to seek by all the means that can be, that men may be peaceable, and that we have no quarrels with them, yea that we seek to appease them that are raised up: we must (as much as lies in us) prevent them: but yet if we cannot altogether perform it, when we shall see any quarrels begun, we should endeavour to kill it: yea by the means that I have already spoken of: that is to say, by forgoing our right, as much as shall be possible for us. This then is the sum of what we have to learn. Now it is not said in this place, in what form they swore: but we shall find afterwards, that Isaac always made his oath unto the living and everlasting God, rendering honour unto him to whom it belonged, albeit he had to do with heathen people, who had forged idols and corrupted the true service of God through their own superstitions: yet continued he in his own soundness. Thereupon it is said, that his servants being returned, (as we expounded yesterday) they said unto him: We have found living water. And after he adds concerning Esau:

"That he took a wife from among the Hethites, yea two wives: which were bitter to the souls of Isaac and Rebecca."

showed him that he should be assured from thence forth that none should hurt him, seeing the king himself of the country was come to

seek him, but also he had water given him, which he might enjoy peaceably and quietly as his own.

When therefore our Lord shows this great favour towards Isaac, let us know that he tempts not his above their strength, but always sweetens their afflictions in such sort that they shall not be as it were ever oppressed & quite overthrown: and let us hope, that altogether like as Isaac was upheld, and that God after he had afflicted him, looked also again unto him to give him somewhat wherewith to comfort him, so likewise must we wait, & then we shall not be deceived, if we rest there. For God knows our frailty, and there is no doubt but he will always give us such taste of his mercy & favour, that we shall have good cause to bless his name, and have no occasion to grieve ourselves in such sort, that we know not how to comfort ourselves any more in him.

But the principal point is, that Esau took two wives from among the Hethites. Here we begin to see already that Esau was not only once profane, but that he went on in that course, and gave himself wholly thereto, as we have showed heretofore, that after he had well filled his belly with the pottage that Jacob his brother had prepared for him, & when he had eaten & drunk, he went his way, & despised his birthright.

Moses also rehearses now that he took two wives from amongst the Hethites: for if he had had any remorse within him, & that he had esteemed the promise of the spiritual inheritance made unto his father, it is certain that he would have held himself as separate from all those people. For he knew full well, how his grandfather Abraham had behaved himself in that point, that he had made his servant to swear solemnly, that he should not take a wife for his son Isaac in that land of Canaan: he knew that his mother was sought after, in a

far country, in Mesopotamia, because God would have this house as it were apart, & would not have it mingled & mashed with those of that country.

What does he therefore, when he takes two wives of the inhabitants of Canaan, whom God had accursed? This was as much as if he had forsaken the promise of salvation, and as though he had renounced, to make any more reckoning thereof than if it had not been worth a straw. Lo one testimony already how Esau made himself unworthy of his birthright: & this came to pass because he was not governed by the spirit of God, as also we have showed before, that God will so hold in & keep his elect, & in such sort ratify & seal in their hearts his goodness & fatherly adoption, that they shall soar up to him, & despise this world, to the end they may rejoice in those spiritual benefits he hath prepared for them: but contrariwise, he lets loose the reins to all those whom he has rejected, in such sort, that they harden themselves: & although this be not done all at once at the first push, yet notwithstanding a man shall find in the end, that there is no seed of the fear of God, nor of godliness in them.

This, therefore, is the thing we have to bear away upon this place. And hereupon let us learn in such wise to behave ourselves that always we labor to sunder ourselves from them that would draw us to destruction: For it is without all doubt, that if we live over familiarly with the contemners of God, they will soon defile us: their fellowship and conversation is a deadly pestilence. And so much the rather it behooveth us to walk with carefulness herein, taking good heed unto ourselves that we defile not ourselves with the filthinesses of this world.

And let us in the meantime acknowledge that it is also a wonderful providence of God that he would have Esau to take two wives in this

country: For this was to this end, that he might be as it were cut off from the house of his father Isaac: he loved him dearly, and although his wives vexed him, yet for all that he could not withdraw his heart from Esau, knowing notwithstanding that God had rejected him. And herein he resisted God, without ever thinking upon the matter: but God wrought therein after another manner, when he saw such infirmity in his servant Isaac, he brought to pass in the end that he must utterly forsake his son Esau. Mark then how God ruled all in such sort, that his church continued always in her smallness, as it were hidden under the earth, as though it had been nothing there remained no more but Jacob, as we shall see oftentimes, and Isaac was half spent: he was three-score years old when his children were born, and now was Esau of the age of forty years when he took his wives: Isaac therefore was very old. And concerning Jacob, he was also forty years old, and yet was not married. And where then was this stock? It should seem that the Church must quite perish, and all the promises of God be utterly abolished: but although it were so small, that it was contemptible in men's judgments, yet we see that God so well governed his Church, that it remained pure and sound, and that which was profane was cut off from it: as if a house should be swept, and the sweepings be cast out of doors. So fell it out that Esau was rejected, and that Jacob remained alone, as also the heritage was appointed to him.

But now let us fall down before the high majesty of our good God, with acknowledging of our faults, and praying him, that he will make us to feel them in such sort, that it may serve to make us continually to mourn before him, and to ask pardon thereof in such sort, that we may labor to resist it, and more and more be withdrawn from it, until we shall be thoroughly clothed with his righteousness. And that he will support us in our weaknesses, so as we leave not off to call upon

him as our father, although we fall many ways. So let us all say, O Almighty God, Heavenly Father, etc.

## **The Eleventh Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 27.**

3 Now it came to pass when Isaac was very old, and his eyes began to be dark that he could not see, that calling Esau his elder son, he said unto him: "My son," who said unto him, "Here I am."

4 Then he said, "Behold now, I am waxed old, and I know not the day of my death:

5 Therefore take thy implements unto thee, I pray thee, thy bow and quiver: and go into the fields, and hunt some venison for me.

6 And providing some delicate dishes for me, even as I love, bring them unto me, that I may eat, and my soul may bless thee before I die."

7 (Now Rebecca heard Isaac when he spoke thus unto Esau) Esau went therefore into the field to hunt venison which he would bring.

8 But Rebecca spoke unto Jacob her son, saying: "Lo, I heard thy father speaking unto Esau thy brother, saying:

9 Bring me venison, and provide me some dainty dishes which I may eat, afterward I will bless thee before Jehovah, before I die."

WE saw yesterday how Esau, by his marriage, showed sufficiently enough that he had no great care concerning that blessing which had been promised to the house of Abraham, his father. For this was the

stock which must possess the land of Canaan. It must, therefore, needs be that the people who dwelled there then must be quite rooted out, and this land be wholly dedicated to the people of God. Likewise, it must be purged from all pollutions. See how Esau mingles himself amongst them, whom God had already condemned. This, therefore, was a sign that he had fallen from God, for otherwise, he could not have drawn near to that people. And if he would have been an heir of the promise, he should have always kept himself as one listed and chained in, and not have mingled himself, which was no other thing but to stop the course of the grace that was promised. But as we have seen, he took wives from among the Hittites. Mark then how he renounced, as much as lay in him, the grace of God, through which the whole stock of Abraham must possess the land of Canaan for an inheritance. But there was yet a second fault: for he took two wives, which was contrary to the law of marriage, as we have seen. For the sentence which God had pronounced to rest upon was that a man shall have a helper, and not two or three. And further, when Eve was created, and that she was given to Adam, it is said that they should be two in one flesh. Mark then the rule which men ought always to keep. So then we see that Esau even broke the bounds of all honesty, yea of nature itself, and that he was as a beastly man in this behalf. It is true that his grandfather Abraham had two wives: but herein he was to be condemned.

And besides, it was not his desire that provoked him thereunto: but his wife, through overmuch haste, brought him to it. And when everything shall be well weighed, it was an inconsiderate zeal that he had to enjoy that which God had promised him: that is to say, that his seed should be blessed. Now he had no children. He therefore took a second wife: but this was, as I have said, to pervert the order that God had established. He committed evil therein: but in Esau, what can we allege, but that he was a dissolute man, and had nothing

but vice and wickedness in him, so that he could not distinguish between marriage and whoredom? And this is the cause that he took two wives. Now it is very true that in this time, marriage was ill-kept amongst the peoples of the East: for they were always much given to their fleshly lusts: in such sort, that beyond that which is called polygamy (that is to say, plurality of wives), they committed incest also very commonly. And this was a nation very beastly in this point, that they made no account to profane marriage: but this custom does not therefore excuse Esau. And so, let us mark well that this shall be no excuse before God when we shall say that every man does so, and that we have a great sort of companions: let us not think to be free thereby before him. Notwithstanding when vices do reign in a country, and men make a law against them, if some neglect them, every man flatters himself, and every man takes for his warrant those which have led him to destruction.

And (say they), such and such do it well, and afterward when men come unto them and say to them: wherefore do you so? Oh, see such a one did it well. But we shall all be put in a bundle together, and God knows very well how to wreath us up altogether like thorns when we shall make a cloak of their vices, who ought when they do evil to be an example unto us, to make us flee them. But notwithstanding all this, that Isaac is yet blinded with the love of his son Esau: he saw him now too degenerate out of kind, because that he wallowed (as it were) a swine upon a dunghill, because he made a covenant with those people whom God had rejected: and further perverted the order and institution of marriage: yet notwithstanding, his father bears all this. It is said that the wives of Esau did as it were spur him, and that his heart was wounded therewith: but so it is that the love of his son did always hold him back.

Now there might well be some virtue: but this means not that everything was therefore praiseworthy in him: no, he wanted much in that behalf. For he should have had his son, however old he had been, in detestation, for as much as he was so estranged from God, and because as much as lay in him, he had made the promise of salvation of no effect. For what might have become of the Church if the stock of Abraham had been joined with those people? Isaac therefore ought to have been more touched to see his son so profane. And seeing he saw this beastliness in him, that he made no matter of it to have two wives: and he would have had them by dozens if he had been able to keep them. When, therefore, he bears with these faults in his son, it is very certain that he offended God. For unless fathers use severity and correction when need requires, when they see their children to be so wicked they are guilty, inasmuch as they fail in doing their duty. Our Lord has given them authority over their houses and offspring. And wherefore, unless it be to the end to keep them in awe and to restrain them, that they may render an account when any evil shall be committed in their family? Lo, then a fault shameful enough in Isaac: but yet he exceeds farther in doting so upon his son Esau. It is said that his eyes began to fail him, for as much as his sight was dim: but it is certain that this foolish love which he bore to his eldest son blinded him much more than his age or the lack of his bodily senses: for he ought to have marked (as the truth was) that God had preferred Jacob before Esau, and yet nevertheless he resisted it, as we have seen before, when it was said that he loved Esau, and that Rebecca loved Jacob: and this love of hers was an obedience that she yielded unto that heavenly revelation. For God had pronounced this sentence before, that the elder should serve the younger. Rebecca was a great deal better advised than her husband. But he continues still as we may see in this place, and it seems that he would have resisted God. It is very certain that his

purpose was not such: but he is in such wise ravished by his affection that he forgot himself and had no discretion and judgment.

And hereby we may see how we ought always to suspect our affectionate passions. For they rush upon us always to butt against God. As a bull chafed pushes with his horns, so our appetites and desires drive us and ravish us, in such wise that we make war most notoriously against God, yet without ever thinking upon it: it never comes into our memory, "This is forbidden me, God has condemned and rejected it." We have therefore many times our senses so encumbered that we keep not either the way or the path. And hereof we see an example in Isaac. For all the time of his life, he was as a looking glass of holiness, and led as it were an angel's life, keeping himself in the fear of God: but herein he so faulteth that God is nothing with him. He treadeth under his foot that which he had understood by his wife: that is, that now the right of the firstborn was given unto Jacob.

Nevertheless, he passeth beyond that. Now, this is a wonderful strange thing for he was notwithstanding the minister of God, and a prophet: and as soon as he had charge to give the blessing to him to whom God had ordained it, yet he dealeth as if he had been the keeper and appointer thereof. God had done him this honor, as if he should have said, "I will bless him whom I shall think good; but the testimony shall come out of thy mouth. Thou shalt be a messenger: especially that which thou pronounceest shall have authority of justice: it shall be authentic, which I will ratify in heaven." God had done him this honor: and yet he leaveth himself to be so snared in ignorance that he goeth quite contrary, specially from his duty, and from that which his office required. This at the first show should seem a thing intolerable: but God, who by his wonderful counsel directed him in such sort in this matter, that he turned darkness into

light, and showed that this was not a thing according to man's fantasy, that the inheritance of salvation should come unto this man or to that man: but that in spite of all men, he must have it to whom it was ordained and established to hold it, and that it must have its effect. But because all things cannot be understood at once, let us follow that order in rehearsing of it, which Moses used: and afterwards we will gather in the end the profit that this History bringeth unto us. It is said that Isaac, seeing himself now to draw towards his end, for as much as he was transitory, he saith unto his son Esau:

I know not the day of my death: And therefore go and hunt venison that thou mayst provide me meat according to my appetite, and which I love, and my soul shall bless thee.

Isaac, in saying that he knew not the day of his death, signifies that he saw himself to draw near to the grave already: For there is none that knoweth the day of his death. God would always hold us in suspense and doubt concerning this, to the end we might always be ready. Death (as it is said in the common proverb) is sure to all, but the hour of death is unknown unto us: and this is very profitable for us: for we see how men are given to their pleasures and are merry whiles that they think to have some truces or some release. And what should this be if we knew certainly of the end of our life? Every one would bend himself to all kinds of evil, and God should be despised even to the end. But when our Lord handles us short in such sort, that from the womb of our mother we are still besieged with death: as we see of young infants, who die before they come into the world: so far is it off, that we cannot live even the minute of an hour, but that as soon as we are born we are subject to death, as our frailty declares. For with what a number of diseases are we compassed? And to how many dangers and hazards is our life subject? So then, there

is neither young nor old that should not say by good right, that he knows not when he shall die. But the meaning of these words is as I have said: to wit, that Isaac knew well that he could not continue in the world. And indeed, although young people and they who are strong and in the flower of their age, ought to prepare themselves to forsake the world, and every hour to die while they live: yet do we most fail herein, albeit our nature warns us to give ourselves no more to the world. So that we have to gather of this drift of Isaac, that as every man sees himself weak and transitory, so that he draw his legs after him where he has lived long, that this (I say) should stir us up so much the more to prepare ourselves to die.

Now it is very true that he spoke here to no other end but to bless Esau: but so much this admonition importeth, that when we see death to approach, that we learn freely to yield up ourselves into the hands of God, and to glorify his name in such obedience, that we live no longer to ourselves: and after we shall have disposed of everything in such sort that there be nothing that holds us or lets us, from going cheerfully forwards when we shall be called. But when he speaks of the blessing, this is not to be understood of common prayer. For there is no doubt but that Isaac prayed every day for his children: and it is said here: "That I may bless thee before my death." We may then gather that this blessing whereof Isaac speaks was had in special regard: and indeed (as I have said) Isaac was as it were the warden and keeper of God's promise: and this treasure was committed into his charge and credit, to bless. And mark why the Apostle says, "The lesser was blessed of the greater," because it must needs be that in this case he must have his authority from God. This was declared more plainly in the time of the law: For the priests were ordained, not only to teach the people, and to offer up sacrifices: but also to bless, and the very form thereof was set down unto them. And

oftentimes when Moses speaks of this office, he sets the priests whom God had chosen to bless.

But they do this, in respect of their own persons, no otherwise than as figures: but this was to show that it belonged to our Lord Jesus Christ, to be a witness unto us of the blessing of God, and to ratify it towards us: as also he showed when he ascended into Heaven, and that his hands were lifted up, he blessed his disciples. He shows therefore that the truth and substance of these figures of the law, was fulfilled in him. Now he was so, before the law was written: for God would that Abraham should be the father of the church: and for this cause he blessed Isaac, as if the heritage had been resigned to him, which had been promised to him. Isaac now must do the like: for he received not the blessing for himself, but to the end it should always remain in his house. He must therefore be the minister of the grace of God: as we yet see at this day, that he communicates his benefits and spiritual gifts amongst us, by the hand of those whom he has ordained to this purpose. Men therefore cannot forgive us our sins, and yet nevertheless our Lord Jesus Christ uses this figure of speaking: "To whomsoever you shall forgive their sins, they shall be forgiven." Now yet for all that he has reserved this to himself as he protests in Isaiah. "O Jacob it is I and none others that take away thine iniquities." Now albeit God alone has this power to forgive sins, and to purge us from our spots: yet nevertheless, he does this by the hand of men. We have in Baptism an infallible token that God will not lay our offenses too our charge: but that we are as righteous and clean before him: and farther we have an earnest, that he will renew us by his holy spirit, to the end we should walk in all purity. Now this cannot be given us of men: but yet God makes them herein as instruments, and all through his favor.

Again, Is it in the power of any mortal creature, to make us partakers of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ? And yet nevertheless in the supper when the bread and the wine are distributed, it is certain that this is not a vain and empty figure, but that all is accomplished, and that our Lord Jesus Christ shows himself faithful in this: For it is he who gives it: and it were too much to attribute it to those who are and can do nothing, to say, that they have our Lord Jesus Christ to communicate to them which come unto them to receive a morsel of bread, and a drop or two of wine. And indeed this is well shown unto us, when he says: "My flesh is bread from heaven." And he gives it after two sorts: one is, that which he gave, when he offered up himself to his father for the cleansing of sins. "The bread which I will give unto you (says he) is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world."

Lo then two kinds of giving: for he gave his flesh, when he offered it up for the satisfaction of all our faults, to the end that God might be appeased towards us, and that we might be released to become righteous. Now the second giving is that which he makes daily. Now if it belongs to Jesus Christ to give himself unto the faithful, who receive him by faith, it follows then that this ought not to be attributed to men, not as though they had this power: but only that Jesus Christ ceases not to apply this thereto. And thus it has been in all times: For God has evermore reserved to himself the praise of men's salvation: but this lets not, but that these may be instruments by whom he works. Lo then how this makes for Isaac, to show that he must pronounce the sentence of that blessing whereunto he was ordained. And indeed we see this in the doctrine of the Gospel: for what is the preaching of the Gospel? It is the power of God to salvation to all believers (says Saint Paul:) and there he speaks of that word which proceeds from our mouth. What, the power of God? Why, it is nothing in itself. It is true: but it pleases God to display his

power by the means of men, and would that his word should have such effect and power in the working, that it be as it were a key to open unto us the kingdom of heaven: as also he has compared it to the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.

So then, let us mark well that Isaac speaketh not here of any common blessing: that is to say of prayer, as when we bless one another, and when we pray that God will show mercy to our neighbors, and that he will give them that which he knoweth to be fit for them. And thus much concerning blessings. But Isaac knew that he was ordained the minister of God to dispense that treasure that was committed to his charge. And this is worthy to be noted, to the end that we hate not the doctrine that is preached unto us, knowing what it importeth. For there are many fantastical men that refuse all inferior means, and would without wings mount up above the clouds. And is not God, say they, sufficient to teach us? Is it not he that giveth faith? And is the Holy Ghost in the hands of men? What need have we to be preached unto? And to what end is it to read so much? All this is superfluous: For God can sufficiently inspire us, without having our ears so battered with the tongue. For he hath all that is needful for our benefit and salvation: and he will bring it to pass. And must men then hold him as it were bound to them? And must the power of his spirit be mashed and mingled with those inferior means as though he were not at liberty? Lo what these fantastical spirits say.

Now they consider not that God is not tied and bound to men when he useth their service: for he doth it as it seemeth good unto him. It is true that faith ordinarily cometh by hearing, as S. Paul saith: so that we cannot have faith unless it be by men. And cannot God as well do it otherwise? The question here is not of the power of God but of his will, and of that which he hath ordained. And therefore when we shall say, And cannot God do this and that? He can do it:

but seeing he will that it be otherwise, we ought to rest there. So then, let us learn to receive this doctrine which is daily taught us, with all reverence, knowing that when we shall have this testimony, that our sins are forgiven us, all is ratified in heaven: as if God himself should speak: For he will not have us to esteem his truth according to men, who are brittle and liars and amongst whom there is nothing but vanity: but he will have his truth esteemed for itself sake, and for its own nature. And in the meantime, let us have this sobriety and modesty therein, to submit ourselves to the order which he hath established. And thus much concerning this word of blessing.

Now here Moses begins to rehearse how Rebecca found out a subtlety and craft to rob Esau of his blessing, and to transfer it to Jacob: and after that we have spoken of the vices of Isaac, we see the like in his wife Rebecca: and yet nevertheless they both believed in God: notwithstanding that it was so darkened and bewrapped, that it could hardly be discerned. That Isaac had a true faith: and that this proceeded from a true zeal, it appeareth plainly: For if he had not been thoroughly persuaded hereof in himself, that the heritage should be given him which was promised to him, and to his seed concerning this blessing: What had this been? Surely but a crafty part and a thing of nought. Isaac therefore must needs be resolved, howsoever he saw himself as it were already in the grave, his life to be spent, and to have but a day to live: howsoever this were, yet nevertheless he always held this sure which was said unto him: to wit, that his family should be blessed, and that God had chosen him, and that this was not in vain, and that albeit he saw not the fulfilling of these promises in this world, yet notwithstanding that God was in heaven, and that neither he nor his should be deceived: but yet they must wait for this.

Wherefore Isaac having fought all the time of his life against all the temptations which might have overthrown him, doeth yet in death persevere in faith and patience, and doth this honor unto God that he doth boldly trust in him. For whosoever trusteth in God shall never be confounded. Isaac had this, and this was a very excellent faith. For see a poor wayfaring man: it is said unto him, thou shalt be the heir of this country, and yet notwithstanding he had no water to drink as we have seen. Now notwithstanding death doth threaten him: yet knoweth he not when it shall be, saving that he is altogether ready for it. And yet for all that he despiseth both Satan and the world, and remaineth steadfast in this, that God will not deceive him: and that it is all one to him whether he die, or whether he moulder in the ground: so that the truth of God may yet continue, and have his full virtue and power. Lo Isaac, he who seeketh not for the world, but forsaketh all his senses and remaineth steadfast: and doubteth not but that God had mercy on him and on his stock. Herein as I have said we have good cause to praise him: and yet in the meantime he was so blinded with the love of his son, that he fought against God, though he never once thought thereof. This was not a manifest rebellion nor of wilful malice: but it was because he was sluggish and knew not his office but in part. He knoweth very well that God would advance him to such a dignity, that he might be the messenger and witness of this blessing: He knoweth this, and notwithstanding on the contrary part he is deceived. He had therefore in this case a particular Faith: he had a good zeal mingled with the affections of the flesh.

But let us come to Rebecca. Rebecca behaved herself here with foolish rashness: for what an attempt was it, for the blessing of God, to be profaned through craft and lying? yea, (I say) lying so foul as nothing could be more. The matter was here of the salvation of the world, the question was of having Jesus Christ whom God should

send for a Redeemer. But how proceedeth Rebecca therein? It is certain that a thing of such importance ought to be handled with all fear and lowliness: what a thing is it then that she cometh foolishly to attempt that which seemeth good unto her, in so excellent a work of God and which surpasseth all others? For Rebecca knowing well that the blessing which she sought for her son Jacob imported that he should be head of the Church during his life, and that of him should come our Lord Jesus Christ: doth not withstanding overthrow it, that she careth not to lie, to falsify, to pervert all: and also it seemeth, that she setteth out the grace of God but in a mockery and contempt: For this was to make it to be basely esteemed, to say, that it should come bewrapped about the neck of her son, and in the hands of skins, colouring that he is hairy, and seeming to rob Esau of all his ornaments: and again that she maketh her son to lie: and farther Jacob, who went to seek a Kid which she causeth to be sodden, and maketh him believe that it is Venison: And after that he had the smell of the garments of Esau: to be short it might be said that she would have overthrown the election of God.

Lo, therefore, very foul faults, and yet all this proceedeth from an excellent faith, if ever there were any. This is very strange: But we may easily judge it. Wherefore then had Rebecca regard? She loved her Son Jacob, and what should it avail him to have been blessed through deceit? For this was neither to get him riches nor profit in respect of the world: yea which is more she layeth him open to the wrath and curse of his Father: Again she knew Esau who was full of venom, full of fierceness, spite and wrath: and indeed we shall see afterwards, that Jacob was in danger of his life: Rebecca knew all these things, notwithstanding she setteth fire on her house, where she might have kept her darling with her, to have been always with him, to have administered that unto him which he might have needed in the world, without putting him in any such danger. But

what did she? she had printed this in her heart that the birthright belonged unto Jacob, as God had promised her, and so she would obey God, and esteem this birthright, although it was nothing accounted of amongst men: as we shall afterwards find, that Jacob called Esau his Lord, that he humbled himself before him, yea, even to the bowing of the knee.

Now although that this same birthright were worth nothing in respect of the world, yet doth Rebecca greatly esteem it. See then undoubted and sure testimonies of a great and exquisite faith which was in her, that she would obey God in despite both of her husband and all that he had: so that she might execute that which God had pronounced, she passed not: And that she esteemed these spiritual blessings more than anything which was in the world. Lo then the undoubted marks of her faith, she had so great zeal that she forgot herself and regarded not any whit whatsoever mischief might come upon it. And why so? Forasmuch as she conformed herself to the will of God: and forsook her eldest son, and cast off all motherly affection: and knowing that he must be cut off: very well says she, let him go as a rotten member forasmuch as God hath so ordained. We see here in Rebecca notable virtues mingled with vices.

And hereby we are admonished to walk in fear, albeit that God give us a singular affection to meditate upon him, notwithstanding we shall always be in such sort wrapped in darkness, that when we imagine to do the best we can in the world, yet there shall be cause for us to amend when God shall call us to a reckoning. And in good sooth, there is not any one which doth not prove this to be true: for although that this be our mark, to strive thither whether God hath called us, yet do we make so many false steps that it is great pity to see: and they which run more swiftly do bring themselves in order to God, yet for all that, they go out of the way and have many outlopes

& cross paths, & God suffereth them to the end that we should not have whereof to be proud. For if virtues themselves be faulty before God, alas what shall those vices be which are altogether condemned? Do we labour to do well, do we enforce ourselves thereto: yet notwithstanding we shall offend God. And why so? It is because there is such infirmity in us, and we are wrapped in ignorance: Although that God enlighten us, and that we see the way well, notwithstanding, yet such clouds do oftentimes come before our eyes, that instead of keeping of our way, we stray either on the one side or on the other.

Mark how faulty the virtues of the faithful are, to the end that we may learn only to rest ourselves in the mere goodness of God, and to the end it would please him to pardon our offences, and also to accept that for righteousness which he might justly condemn. How then is it that our works are acceptable unto God? how is it that he calleth sacrifices of a sweet smelling savour, and that they are so acceptable before him, that they shall have a reward?

Alas, it is not any merit as the Papists imagine: but it is because that God hath justified that, which he might rightly reject, and account as it were abominable. So let us mark that in the faith of Isaac, we may behold the imperfections which are in us, whiles that we live in this world, albeit that God have renewed us in part by his holy spirit, and again let us know that God worketh in such sort that the evil which is in us, hindereth not him to accomplish his work even by our means.

As for example, If we will search till we find an Angelicall perfection in a mortal man, there shall never any be found that hath it, neither was ever any found who was not tainted with some kind of fault: and therefore the Priests which were figures and representations of our Lord Jesus Christ, first of all asked pardon for their offences, although that they made intercession for the people, and were as it

were mediators, and that by their sacrifices they abolished sins: yet notwithstanding must they begin at themselves.

But now by the way if we will seek ministers of the word, in whom there is no fault, it is certain that we cannot find any: and it must needs be that the most excellent men be examples unto us, of the brittleness and weakness of men. But now if we will conclude: and how then shall I find my salvation by their means? For I see yet that they are full of imperfections. But let us learn (as I have said) in the person of Isaac that God leaveth not off to accomplish his work, although there be yet ignorance in them, who ought to lead us, who when they distribute unto us spiritual gifts, which they have committed unto them, and whereof God hath made them keepers, although they be not altogether such as they ought to be: notwithstanding we leave not off to make our profit of them: for God useth and ordereth them in such sort in this work which he will do, that his grace is no whit hindered, because a man might find things to be bettered in them.

This therefore is the thing that we have yet to mark upon this place. But to be short, we see that the faith of the children of God shall oftentimes be weak and entangled, not as the Papists have imagined: for they call an entangled faith beastliness, when a man shall say, O, I believe in my mother's god: I know not what the whole Christianity meaneth: But lo it is enough for me to go simply to work: and I believe as our holy mother the Church believeth: and indeed the wiser sort of Priests will say, I believe in the god of my Chambermaid: because she believes in god who makes Cabbages to grow after that she hath planted them.

See the implicit and folded faith of the Papists, which is a very sorcery of the Devil: but the entangled faith of the children of God, is

because they be holden in ignorance. But yet notwithstanding there is some light: but what is that faith? It is an understanding which we have of the goodness and favour of God, after that he hath illuminated us by his holy spirit and by his word. For faith can not be without these two things: that is to say, without the word of God: I say as God hath set an order in his church: and after it cannot be without the gift of the spirit: For the word of god should be preached unto us both morning and evening, and we can profit nothing therein, unless God do open our ears and enlighten us, forasmuch as we are miserable blind ones.

The Sun shall always shine upon us: but they that are blind discern not between the day and the night, to them both are alike. And even so is it with us: that if God illuminate us not within, when he sendeth his holy word, to show us the way, we should always remain as poor strays, or lost sheep.

So then, it behooveth that our faith have light in itself: but yet I say, that this light is compassed and entangled with great darkness. For we behold not God face to face, and we are not capable to comprehend his secrets: and this is sufficient that we know them in part, and that we have some taste of that which shall be revealed unto us in perfection, then when we shall put off our flesh, and shall be translated into that heavenly glory, to be companions of Angels.

Lo then briefly what we have to learn upon this place, to wit, that our faith, although it be great and exquisite, yet nevertheless it shall always have some weakness, and some imperfection and ignorance mingled with that, which God hath given us to know. Now hereof we may gather, that when the scripture pronounces that we are justified and saved by faith, it means not, that it is by the desert of faith. For if it were so that our salvation were founded upon the dignity of faith,

then must our faith be perfect. For if our faith be weak (as I have already said) and that we have but only a part of it, then should we have but a part of salvation: and further it should be shaken, and we should always be wavering and in doubt.

But when it is said that we are saved by faith, it is because we accept the mercy of God, which we ought to esteem fully sufficient for our salvation. Our faith is imperfect: yea but when there shall be never so little a spark, yet nevertheless shall the goodness of God supply that which is wanting: even as we now bear this corrupt lump, not only in our bodies, but in our whole nature. But we know that our souls go unto death, and in the meantime where is our life? It is in us.

How? In that we have received the spirit of God, saith Saint Paul in the 8th chapter to the Romans. And have we the spirit of God in fulness? No not so: There is as it were but one spark or drop of it: but this saith he is life: and shall swallow up all whatsoever belongeth to death in us, and shall make it of no effect.

Let us mark then that although our faith be very little, and that in respect of us we conceive not the hundredth part of the benefits which God offers unto us, yea and that we do not so much as by a lick, taste his grace, yet nevertheless we must not therefore despair to be saved through faith. For the matter is not as I have said, of our estimation, or of our passing and weighing it in our balance, that is to say, if we have an excellent faith to obtain the grace of God, and that which is necessary for our salvation: but the question only is, that when God hath declared that he will be our father, that we embrace this promise, and stay ourselves thereupon.

And if there be any doubts or distrusters, that we resist them, and that we hold fast this conclusion, O we are yet sure that God will not disappoint us. Mark then what we have here to hold, as well by the

example of Rebecca, as by the example of Isaac. But Moses says now expressly that Jacob refused, saying:

"And how shall this be? I am not hairy as my brother is, and if my father shall find the deceit, he will curse me."

Here we see, as it seemeth, two great vices in Jacob: The one is, that he feared his father more than God. It is true that it might so be judged thereof, but when all shall be well marked, it is certain that it was the fear of God that moved him thereunto. For concerning the curse of his father, he was no otherwise careful of it than in this, that it was imprinted in his heart, that his father was established to be as it were a witness of the promise which God had given unto him. Seeing therefore that Jacob had this, it is a sign that he rested not upon anything from man: but that in the person of his father he considered that which God had decreed.

The other evil was that he doubted. Now we know that in our life if we be not well certified, we shall not remove so much as one finger, to the end we sin not, and that God be not offended. And why so? Obedience is more worth than sacrifice. When therefore we shall attempt to do anything, not knowing whether it be lawful for us, and whether God do allow it: this is as much as if we should despise God: so that we should not know how to eat or to drink, or to be short, to do anything: no not so much as to remove a mote, but that all our actions should be condemned, and that God should have them in utter detestation: and St. Paul also pronounces it. For by this word of faith he understands certainty in the 14th to the Romans that we be assured that what we do is permitted of God and is agreeable to his word.

But see Jacob who says, "how shall this be? I am not hairy as my brother is." He doubts: that therefore is a sign that after he has

obeyed his mother, he should commit evil, and that all that he should take in hand should be nothing but confusion, and that God would detest it. And surely so had it been if he had always remained doubtful, that whatever he should have done, being of sin, it should have been to provoke the wrath of God: but we shall see by that which follows that he was confirmed. But the answer which his mother gives him is:

"The curse be upon me."

But she was not so lean and so dry as here she is set forth unto us, but she showed him that he was chosen of God, and that the birthright belonged unto him. And indeed, we shall see how he was confirmed, and that he feared no more when he was before his father.

Thus then it may easily be gathered that Jacob was confirmed, to resolve himself and to know that the blessing which he sought could not be disappointed: in the meantime, notwithstanding, we cannot excuse him, but that he fell foully, even in the very beginning. The matter was here of the building of his house, but Jacob doubts and sticks here, not knowing whether it were good or evil. We see then that he had a very evil beginning: and consequently that he had nothing in that case but confusion, had not God helped therein. To be short, we see as well in Jacob as in Isaac and in Rebecca, that the grace of God came not unto them, nor had any entry unto them by their own wisdom, nor by their good means which they invented.

Lo therefore the defaults which are here: but God hath outgone all their faults and offenses, and wrought in such sort through his infinite mercy, that we have good occasion to bow down our heads, and to confess that there is none but only he upon whom all our happiness depends, and from whom it proceeds.

But now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, in acknowledging of our faults, and beseeching him that he will open our eyes, that we may always more and more know them, to the end we flatter not ourselves in them: but that we may sigh and groan to obtain pardon of him: and in the meantime that we may in such sort fight against all our carnal desires, that in the end we may be fully framed to his righteousness, from which we are yet so far off. And that he show not this grace only unto us, but also to all peoples and nations of the earth. &c.

## **The Twelfth Sermon of Jacob and Esau. Genesis 27.**

13 But Jacob said unto Rebecca his mother, "Behold, my brother Esau is a rough, hairy man, but I am glib and of a smooth skin."

14 "Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall be unto him as a deceiver; and so I shall bring upon me a curse and not a blessing."

15 Unto whom his mother said, "Your curse be upon me, my son. Only listen to my voice, and go your ways and bring it unto me."

16 Therefore, departing, he took it and brought it unto his mother; and his mother took it and made dainty dishes, even such as his father loved.

17 Afterwards, Rebecca, taking the most precious garments of Esau, her eldest son, which were with her at home, she put them upon Jacob, her youngest son.

18 And putting upon his hands the skins of kids from amongst the goats, and upon the smooth of his neck.

19 She put the dainty dishes which she had made, with bread in the hand of her son Jacob.

20 So he, coming unto his father, said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am, who are you, my son?"

21 Jacob said unto his father, "I am Esau, your eldest son. I have done as you have commanded me; now rise, sit down, and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me," etc.

WE have here to continue the purpose which was yesterday begun: that is, that God directed Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob in such a manner that notwithstanding the faults that were in them, he left not off to put into execution what he had determined concerning the blessing of Jacob and rejecting Esau. And yet this is not to clear Isaac for his part, as though he had not faulted foully, and that the like fault had not been found in Rebecca and in Jacob: but God passed them over. And so, we see that GOD waits not upon men, neither depends upon them, when the matter stands for the performance of his counsel. It is very true that he will use them to serve his turn: but he shows notwithstanding that he works all alone and of himself: and when his creatures serve him as instruments, it is no farther than it pleases him, and not as though he were bound by any necessity: yea and albeit that things in respect of men go quite backward as it seems, yet this shows that his power is sufficient, so that it needs no help from others.

Now we have said, that in this matter of Jacob it may be seen how he fell into doubt: and this was contrary to faith. It behooves therefore that GOD on the one side supplied this want. Concerning that, that it is said that he should bear the curse: it is for that he knew that his father was ordained to this, that he must ordain an inheritor, not only for worldly and transitory benefits, but of the promise which belongs to the spiritual life. He knew this: and therefore he respected not only a mortal man, but the living God. Now touching Rebecca, she says, the Curse be upon her. We see how she was ravished (as was yesterday handled) in such sort, that she spoke, as it were at random: but there is no doubt, that in the meanwhile she wist not, that this could do no hurt. It is true that she regarded not her fault. For although she had a good ground to obey GOD, and so to deal that his election might stand in full strength: yet notwithstanding she ought not in the meantime, to have made such a craft to bear sway, wherein there was nothing but deceits and lies.

For GOD (as we have said already) is able enough to accomplish his own work, and to bring his own counsel to an end: he needs not to borrow anything of us. It is not lawful therefore by a stronger reason, to go about to advance his truth by our lies. But Rebecca does it: so that in this behalf she cannot be excused. But this example is not here set before our eyes, to the end that we also should imagine the like: For it will fall out, that at all assays we shall be ready to mingle our fantasies, that our matters may go well: and this is even as much as if we thought not God to be wise enough, or rather as if he were not strong enough, or had not the means in his own hand, to bring matters to a good end and issue. But in so doing, we do (as a man would say) control GOD: to say, very well, let him work, but after what manner? Not according to his counsel, and according to his power and infinite puissance: but according to some light thing, and we will first of all have that thing done, which we have imagined and

forged in our own brain. For we will say, I find this to be good, this will be a very good and necessary mean. But are we so over wise? that we must straight way enterprise this thing, and that we must put our hand to the pie in such sort.

But mark, God hath not so ordained by his word. Lo then a rashness not to be borne. And yet is this very common, and every one shall find of this vice in his seed. But so much the rather ought we to learn to add nothing of our own, seeing we have always this corrupt medley which we must either this way or that way drive out of our heads. And when we shall so have wrought after our own guise and fashion, we shall do nothing else, but mar and overthrow all. But if GOD do not lay such faults to our charge, and does yet nevertheless accomplish his work: this is not to the end we should boast ourselves therein: as oftentimes they who have overreached themselves, can say, O, it is fallen out well: yea, but this is because GOD has pardoned this folly, and that nevertheless he leaves not to support us, albeit we were not worthy thereof. Let us learn therefore in no wise to excuse our presumptions, when God shall make that to prosper which we have naughtily and wickedly attempted: but so much the rather let us magnify his mercy, when we shall see that although we have fought against him, and have gone about as much as lay in us to forslow his work, that he yet has not left off to give it his course. This is that briefly which we have to bear away concerning this place.

Now it follows after, that Jacob went to seek two kids, which he brought unto his mother, that she might dress some dainty meat, such as she knew Isaac loved. And after that she clothed Jacob with Esau's garments, and put the skins so upon him, that it seemed he was a hairy and rough man.

But here men might judge, that this was a very childish deed, and a very toy, forasmuch as it was a counterfeit meat, for she took of a kid, instead of some venison: and after that the father had eaten and was well filled, he blessed his son, and that this was as it were a reward for his dinner: and again that Jacob came in a disguised habit, as if he had been upon a stage counterfeiting his brother Esau, under color of his garments, and had his poul, his neck, and his hands: and in all this nothing was seen but matter of laughter. But to the end that we should be kept in reverence, and make our profit of this history, let us learn to look unto God's election whereof mention was made before: For if we have not this foundation, it is certain that in all that Moses rehearses, we shall not find anything that may move us, or give us any persuasion, that this was guided and governed from above.

But when we shall be resolved, that GOD had given the birthright to Jacob before he was born: notwithstanding we have to note, in seeing these things so sottishly ordered by men of an unadvised zeal, that therefore we cease not to say: Lo God who is always unchangeable, although men through their sturdy boldness, and foolish presumption trouble and turn all upside down, yet nevertheless must his counsel remain entire and perfect. This therefore is that we have to note, to the end we may make our profit of this history. Moreover, when it is said: That Jacob came to his father, and said unto him: I am thy son Esau, eat and drink. Hereby we may see how men harden themselves, when they have once attempted to do anything of an unadvised zeal, how they wax bolder and bolder. At the first Jacob doubted: If I (says he) be found as a mocker before my father, he will curse me, but by and by he cares for nothing, he speaks as boldly and frankly, as if it should have been said, that he was sure to be in Esau's place. But hereby we have to note, before we begin anything, to think whether we have allowance from GOD, and whether he will guide us:

and to see that in all our doing and enterprise, there be nothing but mere obedience. For if we begin once (as they say) to break our bounds, and that we imagine to do this and to do that, howsoever at the beginning we had some scruple and did make great difficulty thereof, in the end we shall shut our eyes and pass further: and when all the objections of the world shall come before our eyes, yet we shall become obstinate.

Forasmuch then as men are so hardened in their foolish and rash counsels, and that we see such a notable example thereof in our father Jacob, so much the rather (as I have said already) must we take heed that we move not a finger breadth, till we know whether GOD will allow that which we do, and that we have taken counsel of his word: For then we cannot be too bold, when we shall be subject unto him, and when there shall be no foolish overweening in us to follow our own fantasy. But we can do nothing of ourselves, however small it be, which is not too much. And therefore (as I have said), let us learn to begin well, to the end, such an end may follow as we should desire. But in this which is here contained in Moses, we may have a figure which shall not be unfit: and that is, that although Isaac was deceived, that Esau was not there, and that Jacob through his sleights obtained his blessing, yet for all this, we have here an image of that blessing which is given unto us of GOD: For it is said in the first Chapter of the Ephesians, That we are blessed with all heavenly graces and spiritual gifts. And after what sort? Saint Paul adds, in Jesus Christ: For if GOD should look upon our persons, we must be his enemies, and he must needs detest us by reason of sin. Seeing therefore it is so, it behooves us to be blessed without ourselves: that is to say, in the person of our head.

And moreover, we must be clothed with the robe of our Lord Jesus Christ. For what can we bring, but altogether filthiness and

pollution? We are wholly made in iniquity: therefore we must be as stink before GOD: but when we are clad with the obedience of his only Son, O then, Lo a sweet savor, wherein, we are acceptable unto him. So that although (as I have said already) in respect of men, there was nothing but confusion, (and as they say) all was jumbled together, yet nevertheless we may apply this to our profit. Jacob was a looking glass of the whole Church: and yet were we blessed in his person, as he was blessed in the person of his elder brother. For the question is not here, of finding it altogether like. If a man say that Esau resembled not Jesus Christ: it is very true: but yet in comparison, it needs not that every part and parcel agree together: it is sufficient, that we see some agreement and likeness in part: as it is said, that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be as a thief in the night. And what? Will he steal? It were a foolish thing to think thus: but it is enough that we see, that they which are asleep in the world shall be taken upon the sudden. So now when he speaks of the birthright of Esau, and that Isaac represented the person of God, and that Jacob was blessed under the robe and countenance of his brother: herein we see, that that was accomplished which we alleged even now: to wit, that we shall be put back if we come in our own name, and in our own person, to get favor before God: but when we shall come there under the shadow of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the firstborn amongst all the Children of God. See how we are received. But notwithstanding it is said:

That Isaac demanded, who art thou my son? I am thy son Esau?

But herein he trusts not himself, and though it may appear that there was some fraud: For he says unto him:

Come near unto me, that I may feel, whether thou be my son Esau or no. We see here that Isaac doubted, and yet nevertheless, the

blessing ceased not in respect of God, to have its virtue and effect: as also it is said that he blessed him in the presence of God. But it is very true that if we have our eyes fastened upon Isaac, we shall say that this act was ill-guided, and that he deserved not to be accounted in any degree of perfection: but that God wrought it, (as I have said) and not only when the inferior means failed, but when they were contrary, and that it seemed, that this had been utterly to abolish that, which was determined. But so much the rather it behooves us well to note, that however God uses men in his work, and does them this honor to serve therein as instruments, yet is there nothing on their part: and we may say: He that plants, and he that waters is nothing. But here Isaac instead of planting and watering, did rather pluck up, and cut off the blessing of God to make it barren and without fruit. But however it was, yet was God therein served. For whether he had planted or watered, he had done it but in part: but he did it not wholly and as he ought: and yet in the mean season (as I have said) the goodness of God surmounted, whatsoever was faulty and vicious in his creatures.

Howsoever it were, we may well say that Isaac in doubting deserved to be deprived from that state and office which was given him, that is to say, that he had lost the grace of God, wherein the salvation of the whole world was included. Lo the treasure which was committed unto him: but he by his unbelief deserved to be stripped of it. But God would not so have it. And to whom shall we attribute this? It must needs be that his mercy be here magnified, seeing that in man there is not only not any help thereto, nor any thing that answers unto it, but quite against it. And yet let us note, that none was more dulled of God than he was. It is true that we saw before, that he had dim eyes, and that he was so weak with age, that he was as a man half dead: but yet this came not to pass naturally, that hearing the voice of Jacob, he was so foully deceived that he once thought not, "There

is some fraud in the matter." He doubts thereof, and yet nevertheless goes on, and albeit it were against his will, yet he blessed Jacob instead of Esau. It must needs be therefore that God dulled him, so that it was not of age only. And this is that which I have said, that God guided his work so, that although men hinder and let it and it seemed to have been, as if they should draw quite contrary, nevertheless the end and issue was such, that it appears that God executed that which he had pronounced, following his secret election, which was made before the creation of the world. And so we know in all that Isaac did, there was nothing but a kind of sottishness, that he was so dull: he had no understanding, he discerned nothing, nor had any judgment, and yet notwithstanding God makes this to prevail. After what manner? How is it that he makes the bread which we eat to be of strength to nourish us? when we shall have well eaten and drunk and shall be refreshed and satisfied, so as he who neither can bow his arm nor his legs, shall have new strength to travel. Shall we say that this is because the bread has any power, any life, or any moving? But when we see that the bread gives us that which it has not, and the corn and wine and other meats: this is to show us that God uses not his creatures in such sort, in any work that we should occupy ourselves in that which we see with our eye: but that we should always bend to this, that as he disposes the order of nature, and likewise guides and governs us, yea and that against nature: that many times he will work quite contrary to that, that is accustomed unto us, in such sort that we shall be astonished thereat: and chiefly when the question is of our salvation. And yet must not we imagine that we bring any thing thither for our part: but that it is God that must accomplish all, who began it and will perform it. And moreover if he work after a strange and unwonted manner, and that there be nothing but an outward show of folly: let us know (as Saint Paul says) that the folly of God is greater wisdom, than all the wisdom of the world.

Now he calls it the foolishness of God, after our opinion: because he works in a contemptible manner, that we might be ravished therein thinking, "What is this that God will say? It seems that he jests and mocks." We will conclude thereof even so. And this is the cause why Saint Paul says, that it is folly, because men rest themselves upon their outward senses. But however it be, this surpasses all the wisdom of the world. Mark then what we have to bear away. And when we shall well remember this lesson here, we shall not be as a great sort of giddy heads, who take all these facts at adventure, and thereupon mock themselves, as though all that were here rehearsed by Moses, were nothing else as a man would say, but foolish trifling.

But when we shall have learned this which is here showed us by Saint Paul, it is certain that we shall have another manner of sobriety, and that we shall not give over to adore the secret of God, although at the first show he glorify not himself: but we shall always look to the beginning and to the end, and not to those means which may give us occasion, and engender in us some offense, or which may swallow us up. To be short, we see that God directed Isaac in such sort that he was altogether blind: we will not say therefore that God gave Isaac here any sight to the end he might do that which appertained to his office, knowing well the cause why, and knowing all the proceeding of the matter: but he was blinded, and yet he held him as it were by the hand, and led him as a blind man who sees nothing.

And indeed we see in the Church, something that answers to this, or else comes very near it: for (as it was said yesterday) The preaching of the Gospel is the power of God to salvation to all believers. When therefore we preach the grace of God whereby we are reconciled, inasmuch as our faults are pardoned us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the blood which he shed for us, is the true purgation thereof, to

cleanse us: Lo then God who opens the Heavens, and calls us unto himself, albeit the word proceeds from the mouth of a man.

But in the meantime, I know not to whom this shall be availed: For every one shall be a witness of his own faith: and when I speak and have not received my part therein, woe be upon me: and I should be more than blind: as also they have been who shall have preached the Gospel, and shall be witnesses of the grace of God, and shall draw poor sinners to salvation, notwithstanding there is nothing remaining for them but condemnation. And why so? For they are as players in whom there is no affection nor zeal. So then, God will be served oftentimes, of a people who are worth nothing, who are as dogs, and the very offscouring: and yet notwithstanding they are as the ministers of his power, to draw those to salvation, that are in the way of destruction.

Moreover there are mercenaries that preach for their belly, and have no other regard but to themselves, or else would make themselves to be very well esteemed: and yet are these nevertheless the instruments of God for the salvation of all believers. And oftentimes the best, they I say, that acquit themselves most faithfully to do their duty, to call poor sinners to salvation, to be guides and examples to all others: these shall not yet find what God will do. And why so? They sow the seed and know not how God will make it profit: and oftentimes they wean to bless, and they curse. And wherefore? Because it must needs be that the vengeance of God be prepared for all contemners. The Gospel is preached, to the end we might find God merciful to us all: but there are many that through their contempt and ingratitude heap upon themselves their own damnation: For the gospel shall be unto them a savor of death unto death, as Saint Paul says: that is to say, a deadly savor, that only the breath shall be enough to swallow them up: as we see yet at this day,

that God works by the ministers of his word, that some are altogether blind, others are blind in part: For the hirelings of whom we have spoken, they are altogether blockish and know nothing: But the good and faithful ministers, although it so be that they know that they have their eyes dim, yet they are ignorant how God will make their labor to profit, or in what sort: and oftentimes their purpose is quite overthrown.

This then is what we have to learn. And in the meantime, seeing God has declared unto us that his word is the open way to the heavenly life, and that he will ratify all that which shall be pronounced here by men in his name: let us keep to that and not doubt (whatever want shall be in us, as well concerning him that speaks as him that hears): that yet nevertheless when we shall receive this word by faith, and it shall be faithfully and in truth handled unto us, we shall be partakers of this blessing.

And herein we may see the beastliness of all those false wretches of the papacy: for mark whereupon they have founded that Idol which they have, to make a god of a morsel of bread: they say if a Priest have no intention to consecrate, it is nothing, and in that the bread is turned into god, it is by the intention of him who consecrates, so as they must be Idolaters in all their Masses (I speak of their own doctrine) if they make not this condition. For what know we (say they) whether the Priest who consecrates, does his business as he ought, and whether his mind be upon his kitchen or chambermaid: for in so doing the bread remains bread: there is no God: and why so? For say they, if his intention be not there it is nothing. But it is very true that they show very well how one error draws another: for because it seems to them that there is a change made of the bread into the substance of our Lord Jesus Christ, for which they have invented that same charm: they add straightway the intention: but

notwithstanding we see that they know nothing of the nature of the Sacraments. I leave now to speak of this conversion which they imagine, and call transubstantiation: but if he that ministers the sacrament: and has this charge and calling, holds the people bound to his intention: what shall this be? A wicked man that shall baptize, he may mock God, and by this means quite make frustrate the sacrament, and after when he shall minister the sacrament of the Supper, the poor people shall therein be mocked, who come thither to seek a pledge of their salvation: he therein manifestly despises God. To be short, they must hold the power of God, (which he most notably sets forth in the sacraments) shut up in their fist. And what a blasphemy is this, and how detestable? But see how far they have come. For it is certain that in the Mass, if they had an Angel there, yet it should never cease to be a devilish thing: but contrariwise if there were a devil in the supper which is ministered, yet it could not let God from accomplishing his work. We must not look to the worthiness of him who gives the bread or the wine in the supper: But God has so instructed us therein, that he has given power to the visible sign: It is he that works by his holy spirit, so as we be not deceived when we come thither, but shall be truly united and joined unto him. Lo then what we have to bear away upon this place, to make our profit thereof. But now let us come to the blessing which Isaac gave. After he had kissed his son he says:

"Lo, the savor of my son is as the savor of a field which God has blessed."

Albeit we see that he was deceived: yet under the savor of this borrowed garment, he accepts Jacob his son, as if he had been his first born. Lo then how the savor whereby we are accepted unto God, proceeds from him who is the first born in the house, to wit, from our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover he adds:

"The Lord give thee, the dew of Heaven, and the fatness of the earth, abundance of wheat and wine."

Here, at first glance, a man would judge that this blessing imported nothing but that Jacob should be fat and well nourished: For Isaac mentions not here any spiritual gifts, as we have showed before, that it was not for any earthly commodities, nor for riches, profit or pleasures that Jacob must be blessed: How shall these things therefore be reconciled? But we have to hold this rule that is given us in the holy Scriptures: to wit, that the grace of God was always clothed as it were with some figures, until that our Lord Jesus Christ came. For when the fathers would obtain pardon of their sins, they had some beast slain, and the blood was shed: sometimes the fat was burned, and the blood was sprinkled. And could a brute beast, I beseech you, blot out our sins whereof we have been guilty? It was therefore a sign, and a figure which God gave unto them, to signify unto them that there was no other means whereby they should be cleansed from their filthiness, but by the blood of the only Son of God, and by the sacrifice which he should accomplish. Therefore, the blessing that Isaac pronounced upon Jacob was not only for the temporal blessings mentioned, but it had a deeper spiritual significance. It was a prefiguration of the blessings that would come through Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate source of all blessings, both temporal and spiritual.

And in this respect, the land of Canaan was as a pledge and gage unto them, that God had appointed a better inheritance for them than in this world. For they might have returned to the country where they were born, which was more fertile than this of Judea, as may appear. Mark Abraham and Isaac pinched with famine, and if they had looked to nothing but to have been nourished here upon earth, they would have forsaken that land of promise. But they rested there. And

wherefore? To enjoy it after their death? Of necessity, must they think of a more high thing than this visible earth, and they must take it in another respect, to say, we have here all that we can desire. But they took the land of Canaan as a pledge that God gave them, until they should come into the possession of that heavenly life.

So then, when we see in this blessing of Jacob, that he speaks of the dew of heaven, and of the fat of the earth, of abundance of corn and wine, it means not that Isaac would only pray for this, that his son might be fed as a hog in a sty, and that he should be fat and full here beneath: but he followed the order that God had appointed at that time: to wit, that he did give unto them pledges of a thing that was much more excellent. And that so it is, Isaac adds a little after:

"That his son should rule over his enemies, and that all nations should bow their knees before him."

And by what right gives he him this? Lo, Isaac a poor stranger that must hire the land where he sets up his pavilion, and must live as it were by the favor of another: and yet nevertheless he makes his son here a King of kings, and all the world to come and do him homage, and that he shall bring the whole earth into subjection. We see then very well that he troubles not himself with earthly things: but he joins both together, to wit, he takes earthly blessings as pledges, to the end to bring his son further off: and in the meanwhile he has his path right that might lead him to the kingdom of heaven, as was promised him. Now we know that things are offered to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, that may make us forget both honors, and all highnesses, dignities, and nobilities of the world. This, therefore, is the thing we have to mark upon this place. It is true that even at this day it must needs be that those temporal blessings which we receive from the hand of God, should be unto us as it were pledges of his

goodness: but they are sometimes more, sometimes less. For in respect that the ancient fathers had not the like light as we have, and were in shadows and figures: this is the cause why God would not so well testify his favor unto them, as he has done unto us at this day. For in the gospel we have our Lord Jesus Christ: & it is said that we must be fashioned after his image.

Now we know that he had nothing in this world, but all kind of miseries and confusions: for we see how he was crucified, so as it seemed that he had been utterly forsaken of God his father: he was in extreme distresses and anguishes. Thus then we must be fashioned to him after another fashion than they were, who were so led by figures. Furthermore, when we shall compare Jacob with Esau, we shall yet better know (as we shall find afterward) that when Isaac blessed Esau, that the blessing which he will use, will be a great deal more large and rich, then that which he used here towards Jacob his son: and yet nevertheless, this was not to bless him to that heavenly life: but he says unto him: "My friend there be not two blessings, seeing that is taken from me, it must stand, and God has blessed him whom I have blessed, forasmuch as he has appointed me the minister thereof, it must needs be that it even so stand, as it has been done, I have no more right in it: I must hold myself contented to have blessed once: and yet afterward he blesses Esau notwithstanding. And how? What, is there any contradiction? no not so: but this is to show us, that there was not any other heavenly blessing, to say, that he whom he blessed should be the head of the church, and that Jesus Christ should come of his race: this was no longer in the hand of Isaac, as he confesses. But concerning the benefits of this world, and that which might satisfy the creatures, he gave him more abundantly, than he did to Jacob. Now then we may easily see, that Isaac speaking here of the dew of Heaven, of the fat of the earth, and of great quantity of corn and wine, he means not that

his son should trouble himself therein: but he simply sets these figures before him, which were pledges (as I have said) to draw him further off: This therefore is the thing that we have to mark. And withal let us note, that when it is said that Isaac had declared:

The voice is the voice of my son Jacob: but the hand is as the hand of Esau. That God had yet purchased this for him. It is true that all this was done through error: but yet besides this error he had some certain knowledge: and the Lord did in such sort advertise him of it, to the end to show that the blessing belonged to Jacob: as also in truth it must be rescued for him, although this had not come to pass: that is to say, albeit Rebecca had not used this ill deceit, yet God knew full well how to hold Isaac's mouth, as also he held the mouth of Balaam.

Behold Balaam who was a liar, who was hired, and came also to curse the people of God, if it had been possible for him, to the end to get gifts of Balak. But nevertheless God did so turn his tongue, that when he thought to curse, (maugre his beard) he blessed them. But Isaac was not as Balaam: For his purpose was not to resist God, nor to abolish his election: but he was blinded with a foolish love which he bore unto his Son (as we have said): and our Lord could well enough govern his tongue when he would, to cause him to bless Jacob: but now when he imagined to bless his son Esau, yet nevertheless does God draw this from his mouth, "The voice is the voice of my son Jacob."

Now this was the principal and chief of the blessing, even the voice: For Isaac gave nothing of his own: but he was a witness of the favor of God, and as it were a herald to publish it. So then, forasmuch as he found nothing of Esau but the apparel and the touching, he must not rest himself thereupon, forasmuch as he found the voice in Jacob. By

this we may see that God would even now already allow it, although that Isaac knew not what he did, nevertheless the blessing must be turned to Jacob. Thus much concerning this word.

Moreover for the conclusion let us mark well when it is said, that all people shall be subject to Jacob: that this is not to the end that he should have any earthly Empire or dominion in this world, either he or his. It is true, that they ruled in the land of Canaan: but however it was, yet did not they bring into subjection all nations. In the time of Solomon, it is true that God exalted his people far and wide: but this was in a figure: for it must come unto our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head both of men and angels. So then that which Moses here rehearses of the sovereign dominion, it is certain that it cannot agree, neither to Jacob nor to his Children, nor to all their posterity, until that we come to our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is the cause why it is expressly said, that he should be the head of his Brethren, and that his mother's sons should bow down before him. This was not in respect of Jacob's person: he had but one only brother, who bowed not himself before him: but rather made him afraid, as we shall see after: but we see the accomplishment of all in our Lord Jesus Christ: and this was not for himself, but it was for our good and for our salvation, that he received all power from God his father, to the end that every knee should bow down before him: In him also it is altogether that we are a priestly kingdom, so that we acknowledge him as our king and our head to worship him.

But now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, acknowledging our faults, and praying that He will make us feel them in such a way that it humbles us before Him. Let it lead us to ask pardon from Him, and also to hate ourselves, and be displeased with our own vices. Let us pray that He would please to reform us in

such a way that we may grow more and more in all holiness and obedience to His righteousness. And let Him support us in our weaknesses, so that He does not fail to fulfill the promises He has made to us, even though on our part we not only neglect them but also seem to push them away entirely. Nevertheless, He will not cease to stretch out to us a strong hand until we reach the mark He has set before us: that is, until we become partakers of the glory He has purchased for us through our Lord Jesus Christ. And may He not only show this grace to us, but to all peoples and nations of the earth, etc.

## **The Thirteenth Sermon of Jacob and Esau, Genesis 27.**

31 Isaac said, "Accursed be everyone that shall curse thee, and blessed be he that shall bless thee."

32 Now as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, it came to pass, I say, that Jacob being scarce gone forth from the presence of his father Isaac, that Esau returned from his hunting.

33 Therefore he also brought unto his father delicacies prepared, and he said unto his father, "Let my father arise and eat of the venison of his son, that thy soul may bless me."

34 Now Isaac saith unto him, "Who art thou?" He said, "I am thy first-begotten son Esau."

35 Then Isaac trembled with a wonderful fear and said, "Who is that which brought unto me venison even now, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and whom have I blessed? Also he shall be blessed."

36 Now Esau, hearing the words of his father, cried out with a wonderful great and bitter cry, and he said unto his father, "Bless me, my father, bless me also."

37 Who said, "Thy brother came through craft, and hath taken away thy blessing."

38 And he said, "How rightly is his name called Jacob! for he hath supplanted me now the second time, he had taken my birthright, and lo, now he hath taken my blessing also," etc.

Yesterday we stayed at this word concerning the blessing which Isaac gave unto his son Jacob, to wit, that whosoever should bless him should be blessed, and whosoever should curse him should be accursed. But it is very certain that this was not in the hand of any mortal man: for it belongs unto God to punish those who do any wrong to his children. Besides that, it is forbidden us to seek revenge; it is not in our power to bring to pass that our enemies have their reward. Now, therefore, it is very certain that Isaac pronounced here the sentence of God, and that he spoke not in his own name but was authorized as a prophet. Indeed, we have seen that this was pronounced from the mouth of God to Abraham in the 12th chapter: "I will bless all those who shall bless thee, and I will curse all those who shall curse thee." God reserved this unto himself. But now, how is it that Isaac presumes to speak after the manner of God, unless because he knew that this inheritance was left unto him, and so he resigns it unto his son, to the end that after his departure he might be the possessor thereof? We see then briefly that Isaac speaks not in

this point rashly. Although he had many foul faults, yet notwithstanding he was grounded upon that which God had promised him, and he knew that this office was committed unto him. And thus he doubted not to curse all those who should curse his stock.

Now, when we hear that God blesses those who bless us and curses those who curse us, we must not think that it is in our power to return such favors or curses. It is God who ultimately determines these matters. However, this should not lead us to idleness or indifference in our actions. Even though we may not be able to directly bless or curse others in the same way, our actions towards others still matter to God. When we support those in need or show kindness to others, God takes note of it and blesses us accordingly. Likewise, those who wrong us will face consequences from God, even if we do not seek revenge ourselves.

Therefore, let us strive to be true children of Jacob, not merely by lineage but by faith and regeneration through the Spirit. Let us have the assurance of our adoption imprinted in our hearts so that we may confidently cry out to God. And in all things, let us praise and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever. This is the way to become partakers of God's special favor and love, where he not only blesses us but also considers any kindness or harm done to us as done unto himself.

Now, concerning the word left for us, it is said that Jacob had scarcely gone forth from his father, and scarcely had he obtained what he went about, but lo, Esau returned from hunting and brought meat to his father while he was lying on his bed.

If we shall consider that which is here rehearsed by Moses, according to the outward show, it is certain that Esau was worthy to have been

blessed. For he diligently performed that which was enjoined him by his father and discharged himself of his duty. And wherefore then was he bereft of his birthright? But see wherein we are often times deceived: that is, because we regard that which we see with the eye. But God regards the right and truth, as Jeremiah says. So then, let us not think that God busies himself in the outward show, which indeed is nothing, and yet notwithstanding we are wont to be ravished therewith, in that we are sensual men. To be short, that which has the goodliest glister and show before men shall oftentimes be rejected before God. As the pagans set great price upon their virtues in the outward show which they had, but we must come further: that is to say, we must know that God sounds the hearts and secret thoughts.

So an act may be highly and greatly praised and esteemed, and yet nevertheless shall displease God. For if the affection shall not be right, there is nothing but hypocrisy and a double courage in it, or else the end shall not be well ordered. For let us put the case that a man gives himself to virtue, and yet has this foolish arrogance in himself, to get reputation, and that men should clap their hands at him in the judgment of the world: he has now already received his reward, and because he is led with ambition, it must needs be that all that he does and takes in hand, must be rejected of God. And why so? Humility is the foundation and root of all virtues. As long therefore as men do seek to merit by their own virtue, it is certain that if they were angels in outward appearance, yet all that proceeds from them is nothing else but baggage and very filth. So let us learn, that when we see how Esau behaved himself so to the eye, and that he failed in nothing, and yet notwithstanding that he was cast underfoot, and that God made no reckoning of him, let us learn not to give ourselves to foolish ambition to be seen of men and to be well thought of.

But let us walk in simplicity and uprightness before God, let us know that if the heart goes not before, that all the service that we can do unto him, shall be justly rejected. Mark shortly that which we have to hold concerning that which Moses has rehearsed here, touching the obedience which Esau rendered unto his father. Now there is also to be noted further, when we shall make a comparison of him with Jacob, we shall find that which was showed before, to wit, that Jacob was not preferred, but by the free goodness of God of which thing there appears no reason unto us, for lo, Esau who went to hunt, who lied not, who deceived not his father, and did not thrust in himself craftily, neither by any deceit or indirectly: he had none of all this.

But what does Jacob? He deceives, he lies, and deals dissemblingly, and presents himself as it were his brother Esau: there was nothing in him but craft and theft concerning this matter, and further, he does greatly dishonor his father, to make him believe one thing for another. We might well say then, that Jacob deserved to be rejected and cut off: but nevertheless God would that he should have the birthright. And whereupon is this founded unless it be upon his everlasting counsel which we cannot comprehend? And so let us learn to humble ourselves: notwithstanding that the reason be not declared unto us why God should rather accept Jacob than Esau, and take the birthright from the greater to give it to the lesser. Albeit then that we know not what moved and induced God to this, yet notwithstanding let us hold for most certain, that he does nothing but most justly because his will is the rule of all righteousness: he is subject to no law, and much less to our fantasy, to do those things that seem good unto us: but so far off is it that though we were able to dispute and to allege all the reasons that possibly we could conceive, yet the only will of God shall overcome all the reasons in the world: and all that which shall enter into our brain must of

necessity be overthrown: as it is said, that he shall always be justified, yea albeit men condemn him.

For they rather have this devilish pride to murmur against that which he does, and to find somewhat to say against it, and to bring forth their reasons: but when they shall have prattled peddlers French as long as they can, yet shall the justice of God remain untouched, and they who have dared rather to slander it and bark against it, they shall remain ashamed and confounded.

Lo therefore yet another principal point that we have to hold in this place.

Now, it is said that Isaac asked first, "Who art thou?" And hearing that it is Esau, he was astonished, yea, Moses further adds more, with a wonderful fear. If Isaac had not known how much worth that blessing had been, and that it should be confirmed by God, if he had not known, that he being called to the dignity and office of a Patriarch, must be a witness of the inheritance of salvation, he had not been so astonished: For he had done as other men used to do. "I have been deceived by my son." He had stormed and chafed against Jacob, yea, and he would have cursed him: and he would nevertheless have concluded, "O, I will keep my right, howsoever it be, this shall no whit prejudice me therein, and I have my authority frank and free."

Lo, then how Isaac might have used himself therein, after the common manner. But he knew that God had ordained him the minister, to cause that the inheritance of salvation should rest in his house: and he knew that he was but an instrument therein, and that this was not because God had resigned his office to him, albeit he had communicated it unto him. For if God communicates his authority to those whom he has established in the ministry of his

word, this is not meant that he deprives himself of it therefore, neither that he gives over his right therein, in any sort whatsoever. Isaac knew then, that forasmuch as he was but an instrument of the Holy Ghost, that which he had pronounced must stand: and there is no doubt also but that it was revealed unto him. For before he was as it were, restrained: the love which he bore to his eldest son had so besotted him, that he had quite lost the remembrance of that which we have seen before: For he was not ignorant of that which God had determined, "That the greater should serve the lesser."

And yet nevertheless, he is a man as it were altogether senseless and devoid of reason, always addicted to his son Esau, and thought not to yield himself to be governed by God. Now this was not of any deliberate and set rebellion, (as we have declared before:) but it was love that blinded him, and for that he marked not that he should simply have rested in the will of God. Lo how he overhastily forgot himself. So then, let us note that this great fear whereof Moses speaks, was as if a man should suddenly come to awaken a man making some alarm about him, and as if he had been seized with some astonishment, and thought this had been some message of death, and that his enemies had been even come to his bed.

Lo in what case Isaac was. But here we have to note in the first place that it is good that God awaken us very roughly, when we shall be so sluggish, and that he come unto us every day. It is true that we will think ourselves watchful enough, when we shall hear the word of God, and will be zealous, and it will seem that we are very wary therein: but all that we have heard is quickly fled from us, and especially when we have contrary things before us. If we have been exhorted to patience, and it seems that we have been therein so well appointed, that there wanted nothing: let one come to trouble us, let us receive but some little blow, incontinent we will be so inflamed

with wrath and displeasure, that we forget that which was spoken unto us.

Again, when we are exhorted to despise the riches and honors of this world, if we be allured thereto by our adversary the Devil, we will be (as it were) asleep in them, and all our senses will be wholly occupied therewith.

Now if our Lord used any simple admonition, it is certain that it is as if it were spoken to a man that were asleep. And what shall men profit thereby? It behooves, therefore, that God awaken us oftentimes by force. And so, as often as God shall scourge us, and that some shall be chastised after one sort, some after another: Let us examine that which was in us, and so we shall know that we were for a time blockish and senseless, that we have known nothing of that which we ought, or else that we were not so attentive therein, and let us learn by the example of our father Isaac, that seeing our Lord does stir us up and would that we should deeply and in good earnest think upon him, and that we should gather up all our senses, which before were wandering: let us learn, I say, to make our profit thereof: Loe this for one lesson.

But let us mark how Isaac willingly submits himself to the will of God. I have already said, that they that will maintain their reputation, will be willful: although they had done the greatest evil in the world, yet they will always maintain it. And lo, this is the cause that so many people plunge themselves so deeply, even unto the depth of the bottomless pits: that is, they are ashamed to be reclaimed: they would have the renown of constancy, and they think that if they should change, that it should be cast in their teeth, as great lightness and inconstancy.

Lo the cause why men harden themselves in obstinacy with boldness and presumption, to follow a thing, however it be, and take the bit in their teeth and will in no case bow, neither to the one side, nor to the other. Now this is a vice very common, and so much the rather we shall be subject unto it, unless we come to that which is rehearsed here. Lo, Isaac who might have been greatly ashamed, for that he was so deceived and abused: a man might say, look upon this drunkard, when he is well whittled, and that he has eaten and drunk, he takes one for another: and further, a man might have said, this was a glutton, when he could not discern between kid and venison: and again, it might have been said: What? when he blessed his youngest son instead of his eldest: being so deceived, and because he did this through error and theft: weeneth he that this shall be available before God?

Isaac therefore might have had many respects, to have been obstinate in his fact. But he forgets all, and knows that forasmuch as it was so ordained of God, that Jacob should be blessed, that it must remain, and no change must be made therein. We are then briefly taught that as often as we shall do any act unadvisedly, which pleases not God, or else if we shall exceed our bounds, and go beyond our calling, however it be, that we always turn the bridle, as soon as we shall be warned, and that we follow not the matter, because this is manifestly to despise God. But especially we have to consider, although Isaac were carried with an evil affection, and although he forgot that which had been pronounced by God, that faith was not utterly quenched in him, albeit it was choked.

This argument was handled yesterday more at large: yet ought it by the way to be further thought upon. For what moved Isaac to say, "I have blessed thy brother, albeit he obtained it by deceit, shall he remain blessed yet?" What lesson learns he? It must needs be that he

knew this before. Now he knew it: but as I have said already, the light of his faith was as a coal of fire that had been raked under the ashes: one should have seen nothing thereof, but let them remove a few of the ashes, and then lo, the sparks appear by and by, and afterwards the fire shows itself.

Even so was it in Isaac: and this is not written only for his person, but to the end we should gather a general doctrine thereof: For oftentimes the like shall fall out and come to pass with us, to wit, that when we shall much lose the bridle to our vanities, that one shall be ravished with ambition, another shall be kindled to covetousness, to heap up goods, another shall have some foolish appetite: to be short, another shall be drawn away and estranged from God, by some manner of means: then lo, our faith which is (as it were) dead.

Now God suffers it not to be altogether abolished: For when the word takes lively root in us, it is an incorruptible seed. It cannot then be quite rooted out: but however it be, it cannot be said that there was not one spark or drop of faith, in such sort that we be so cold, that we think no more of God, that the world has quite overcome us. When therefore any do so wander, that they think only but on their lusts, a man would say that faith were quite dead.

Now this may well be in appearance: but notwithstanding God yet reserves some hidden seed: as we have said, that the fire may well be choked, and yet not altogether quenched, when it shall be raked up under the ashes. For all our affections, the riches, honors and pleasures of the world, are as ashes to choke up this light of God, which ought to guide and lead us. But our Lord having pity upon us, brings to pass, that a little after we acknowledge our faults: and whereas we were so cold, yea as it were altogether frozen, we begin to wax warm, in a good zeal, and to return unto him.

Lo, then, how GOD accomplishes that in his faithful, which we read here of our father Isaac. But this is not spoken to the end we should therefore tempt God, as though it were permitted unto us to suffer ourselves in such sort to be carried astray by the Devil, that our faith might be (as it were) asleep in our hearts and souls: For it will not always fall out that God will awake those which are asleep, and call them again which are estranged from him. Let us learn therefore to walk in fear and carefulness: and especially when we shall find men so dull, that they shall be as it were altogether blockish, and that their faith shall be as it were dead in them: let us learn to fear so much the more.

What holiness was there in David? And yet nevertheless we see that he was for a time, as a man quite desperate. Afterwards, having committed such an abominable fault, to have ravished the wife of another, and to have caused her husband wickedly to be slain with such villainous treachery, that he deserved to be thrown out from amongst men: after all this, we may see, what manner of Prophet soever he had been, what fear of God soever he had in him before: to be short, albeit he were a mirror of Angelic perfection, we see that he was as an Ox or a Hog, he knew nothing, he had no remorse, it seems that God had given him up into a reprobate sense, and had stricken him with a spirit of blockishness: yea and when the Prophet comes unto him alleging this comparison, and speaking unto him of a neighbor, that through violence had oppressed a poor man: O he knew well to condemn others, and in the meantime thought nothing of himself, till that the Prophet said unto him: "It is of thee, it is of thee that I do speak." Until that the Prophet Nathan said unto him: "It is thou murderer that hast done such a deed:" until that he came to give him a blow with a club, as it were a chafed Bull, he continues blockish in it: and forasmuch as the Devil had won him so far, that he

was as it were drunken, yea altogether bewitched, it must needs be that God even thunder against him.

When therefore we see such like examples as this which is here rehearsed unto us by Moses, that Isaac the chief of the Church, is as it were blind herein, until that God had revealed it by force: so much the more (as I have said) it behooves us to take good heed to walk in fear and carefulness: and in the meantime let us learn when GOD gives us such pushes and spurs, to make us return unto him, whereas we were before as it were insensible, and have gotten through long custom such a strong savor: When God gives us the grace (I say) to call back ourselves unto him, that we be moved as becomes us, and that it be not to wipe our mouth after we have said in one word, that we have faulted, as there are many: but that we follow that which is here taught us by Moses that Isaac was afraid. And how? very greatly, yea wonderfully. For it is impossible that we should come to repentance, unless we have a heaviness that must torment us and we be as it were in hell, to feel our wretchedness, and be therein confounded. Until so much be wrought in us, that we be come thither, it is certain that there shall be no repentance in us. This teaches how we must practice this doctrine: to wit, That when our Lord shall have touched us, that on our parts we be as it were wounded to the bottom of our heart, and that we be so astonished, that we return no more to our slothfulness and negligence, wherewith we were for a time overwhelmed.

Now Isaac yet shows his faith better in saying, "He shall be blessed." For he knew that God had ordained him to this office, and that he spoke not in his own name. For the sentence of God cannot be called back; it behooves therefore that he keep him there. So we have farther to gather from this place that we have already touched: that Isaac here passed not his bound, although he had failed through

ignorance, and been deceived in the person, yet he always kept a good principle: to wit, that he had executed that which GOD had committed to his charge: and that therefore this must remain concluded, and have its effect.

Now this is said for our instruction: For we know that at this day our Lord would have the remission of our sins too be shown forth by the mouth of men, he would assure us of the inheritance of everlasting salvation, and also would have his adoption to be declared unto us. Now we must needs have whereupon to resolve ourselves: For if we have not full assurance of our salvation, and if we cannot call upon GOD, it is as much as to shut the gate of Paradise against us. But in the meanwhile, lo, a man who speaks and says, that he will pardon our sins, and yet he is a sinner himself. Again, he promises us the Heavenly life: and [missing text]

brittleness. Lo then that which we have to learn upon these words, "He that hath been blessed shall be blessed." And how so? Had Isaac that Privilege therein, to say that that which he had pronounced should stand? After he had eaten and drunk, and further being a poor blind man, being so blockish that he knew not what he did: being so dull that hearing the voice of his son Jacob, he suffers himself to be led as a poor beast: and yet nevertheless says, "It shall stand?" Yes, but acknowledging his fault, he is confounded, and nevertheless he continues: For he knew whereto God had established him, and thereupon he gives glory to God, and quite casts down himself from his own understanding, knowing well that he had nothing of his own. And so, let us learn that Isaac so ordered himself, and in such sort rested upon the word of God, that he altogether renounced his affections wherewith he was before time carried away.

In the meantime we have here a good rule concerning ourselves, whereby we are warned that when we shall be taught, although this be done by the means of mortal men who are sent unto us, that God does accept us and account us for his own, that this ought to suffice us, and that we may despise Satan and all temptations, & all things that may come in our brain to shake our faith. And thereupon it is said, That Esau cried out, yea by yelling and roaring, and that he howled as it were a wild beast, and that he desired notwithstanding to be blessed: and that his father said unto him:

Lo, it must needs be that the first blessing hold; and that then he despised his brother Jacob, and said: It was right that he was so named. For we have declared before that Jacob's name was drawn from a heel, as if a man should have called him Heelholder; and this was because he held the heel of his brother when he should come forth of the womb. Now, says he, he has given me a blow with his heel. As if a man should say, when a beast rushes upon him, that he has stricken him with his heel. Now, Esau applies this to his brother: He has supplanted me twice now (says he). And this word also comes of Tripping, when a man gives one secretly a blow with his foot, and makes one to fall. He says then, that he has already tripped him twice with his heel. The first time when he took away his birthright, and now when he took away his blessing.

Now here we have to note in the first place, that which the Apostle shows us, to wit, that albeit Esau wept and mourned, notwithstanding he obtained no place of repentance: for he came thereto over late. And this is according to the exhortation which we have made heretofore. It is said that we must not be profane as Esau was, that we must not be given to the earth, nor to all that which concerns our bodies and this transitory life, in such sort that we should forget the heavenly life. And why so? for (says he) they which

profane themselves, and defile themselves in their filthy desires they may cry: but they shall find no place of repentance, for the gate shall be shut against them. Now it is true that this at the first show might be thought strange: For it is said As often, and at what time soever a sinner shall mourn and ask pardon, that GOD will be ready always to receive him to mercy, which return unto him. Lo, the promise is general.

So then, how is it that the Apostle says, that we shall not find place of repentance, if we come too late: For there needs nothing but to mourn? But this shall be easily to be understood, when we shall have distinguished between the cries of the faithful and of the unbelievers. Both the one and the other shall indeed cry unto God: but in diverse sorts: for the faithful shall be touched with true repentance, when they cry and when they mourn: It is said likewise that David roared, and that his throat was as it were hoarse. Lo then the cries which the children of God throw forth: as it is said that he himself brayed like a lion. And a little after we hear what Hezekiah says, that his speech failed him, and that he groaned in himself as swallows, and that he could speak no more: that he was so hoarse, that he knew not how to speak one word, distinctly pronounced: that he was as it were altogether quite thrown down.

We see then that the faithful have had this affection: but in the meantime they had repentance, which touched them to the quick for their faults: as it must needs be that they displease themselves therein, and humble themselves before GOD: and after this they conceived some hope to obtain pardon. Now the unbelievers they will bray enough, but in the meantime they leave not off to have their hearts hardened: tears trickle down from their eyes, but in the meantime they leave not off to be proud and rebellious against God: they have indeed some horror of his judgments, but this is but to set

themselves in despite against him: for they never go so far as to hate their offences, and to be displeased with them: Lo how it was with Esau. And therefore we have to gather that without repentance, these cries shall be rejected of GOD, and shall never come unto him. And when the Apostle speaks of repentance, it is not that he means that Esau had repentance: but he means, that he obtained not mercy, and that God was not merciful to him.

And so let us take good heed unto ourselves, and let us detest this blasphemy which the Devil sows in the world, That there needs no more but one good sigh. For lo, those merry Greeks, when they shall be exhorted to return from their wickednesses: oh, I must yet a good while use it: and God is a good fellow: Lo, yet another blasphemy as detestable, whereat even the very stones should cleave. And further, God is merciful. It seems to them that under the name of mercy they should hold God bound unto them: but it shall be dearly sold them. Yea lo, they come so far that they say, Oh there needs nothing in the end but one good bulke, and one good sigh. Yea but who is that which shall give it? Have we it in our fist? Must not God work therein? When a man shall fall, albeit he have hurt himself, he may well recover himself: but if he have broken his neck, can he recover himself afterward? Now before God all our faults are deadly: and which is more, it is to put us and deliver us into the hands of Satan. And can a man rise up, when his neck shall be broken? as I have already said.

Now it is certain, that as often as we offend GOD, it is as if we broke our neck, as much as lies in us. And so, can we restore life to ourselves after we have lost it? Lo then, what ought to stir us up to walk in carefulness, and not to tarry till the gate be shut against us: but let us hearken to all the warnings that have been given us: and when God shall knock, let us open unto him. And moreover we have

to hold that which is spoken unto us by the Prophet Isaiah: Seek the Lord while he may be found: Call upon him when he is ready to hear. It is true that the time makes no great matter, that we should take any great advantage of it: but yet we must understand for conclusion, that this place of Isaiah was fulfilled when the Gospel was preached, as Saint Paul declares in the second to the Corinthians, Lo the acceptable days, lo the time of salvation. And likewise we must well mark the similitude, which is alleged unto us by our Lord Jesus Christ that we let not the occasion slip: but when God bids us that we come unto him, let us come unto him, yea hasting ourselves, and let us not draw our legs to come slowly, lest our unthankfulness in the end exclude us, and that the gate be shut against us. Let us take good heed, I say to all these exhortations, and so let us make our profit of them, that having found place of repentance before God, we may, after we have bewailed our faults, have our mouth open to rejoice in him, and to praise his holy name, for that he shall have been merciful unto us.

But now let us throw down ourselves before the majesty of our good GOD, in acknowledging our faults, praying him that he will in such sort make us to feel them, that it be not to keep us long in them, nor to slug or flatter ourselves in them: but in such sort to return unto our judge, that asking mercy in him we may there find it in him: and that it be not only to the end that he enter not into account with us, to impute unto us our iniquities and offences: but that by his holy spirit he will purge us, and that we may be more and more reformed: and that he awaken us, that we be not obstinate in our faults: but that we think upon all the corrections whereby he would draw us from the evil way, wherein we have strayed, and that we make such profit of all the advertisements which he gives us, that we be not ashamed to be condemned of him, to the end to obtain mercy. That

not only he will show this favor unto us, but to all peoples and nations of the Earth, etc.

## **An Answer to certain slanders and blasphemies**

¶ An Answer to certain slanders and blasphemies, wherewith certain evil disposed persons have gone about to bring the doctrine of God's everlasting Predestination into hatred.

Dearly beloved brethren, we must not be amazed if the article of the everlasting predestination of God, be so assaulted and fought against by Satan's maintainers, seeing it is the foundation of our salvation, and also serves for the better magnifying of the free goodness of God towards us. On the other side, those Dogs which bark against it thinking to have a good and favorable cause are therein more hardy: as in very truth there is nothing more contrary to man's understanding, than to place the cause of our salvation in the good will of God, in saying, that it belongs to him alone to choose us: without finding of anything in us wherefore he should choose us: and after he has chosen us, to give us faith through which we should be justified. But what? Inasmuch as he is not bound to the person, it is good reason that he be left in his mere liberty to give grace unto whom he will, and to leave the rest in his perdition. But I defer myself to treat more largely of this matter, because you may have large discourse thereof in those Books which are imprinted: which ought too content you.

Concerning the writing which was scattered about, to abolish this article of our faith, in very truth it deserves no answer: being on the one side so full of ignorance & beastliness, that everyone ought easily to judge thereof: & on the other side so full of impudence, that it is a wonder how these troublecoasts & shameless deceivers, abusing so villainously the holy Scriptures should be hearkened unto: notwithstanding because I have understood that there are yet some simple & weak ones that are troubled therewith, I therefore thought good to take the pain to show them that will show themselves teachable: how they ought to resolve themselves, to the end they might be no more deceived by these deceivers.

In the first place, he that hath made that writing, were it Sebastian Chastalio or some such like: to show that God hath created all the world to be saved, he allegeth that he laboureth to draw unto him all that went astray: the which I confess in respect of the doctrine of faith and repentance, the which he propoundeth to all in general: be it to draw his elect unto him, or to make other inexcusable. God then calleth every one to repentance and promiseth all those that return unto him, to receive them to mercy. But this meaneth not that he toucheth to the quick by his holy spirit, all those to whom he speaketh: as it is said by Isaiah in the 53rd chapter. His arm is not revealed to all those that hear. To which agrees the sentence of our Lord Jesus Christ None can come unto me, except my father draw him. And the holy scripture shows throughout, that conversion is a special gift of God. And indeed the place of Ezekiel, whereof this troublecoast maketh his buckler, very well confirmeth my saying. For the Prophet having said, that God wills not the death of a sinner, addeth, but rather will that he return and live. Whereby he signifies that God biddeth and exhorteth all which are gone astray to return to the right way. But not that indeed he leadeth them all to himself by the power of his spirit. The which he promiseth not, but to a certain

number, which appeareth as well in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, as in the 37th of Ezekiel and in the 11th and throughout the whole scripture.

The second reason of this writing is, that all men are created to the image of GOD, the which he saith not to have been abolished but only subjected to evil. As though it behooved man at adventure to believe his simple saying. But contrariwise the Scripture shows, that albeit there remain yet some trace of the image of God in us, yet that the whole is disfigured, so as reason is blind, and the heart perverse: wherefore by nature we are wholly accursed. We see therefore at the least, that by the will and decree of God, we have been all subject to everlasting damnation through the fall of one man. Concerning that which this troublecoast addeth, that if we believe, we are delivered through Christ by the power of the gospel, & of the holy ghost: that serves for nothing, but to confirm our doctrine. For it behooveth that we always come thither, that none believe, unless those which are ordained to salvation Acts 13. & all the scripture is full thereof. Wherefore this is as much, as if he should say, that the elect of God are delivered from that common damnation through faith.

The third article contains a horrible blasphemy that if God have created men to damn them, his will and the Devil's is all one. They that speak so, show plainly enough that they are altogether mockers of God, and despisers of all religion. It pleased God that Job should be robbed and spoiled: to be short, all that is there attributed to the Devil, and to those thieves and robbers, it is said plainly, that it came not to pass but by the good pleasure of GOD. Must we therefore conclude that God's will and the Devil's are all one? But they that know that the judgments of God are bottomless, and shall have once known their own weakness, will adore them with all reverence and humility and know well to put a difference, although that GOD

willeth the same thing that the devil doth, yet that this is indeed in diverse respects. And so, that he deserveth always to be acknowledged righteous, although that his counsel be incomprehensible unto us.

Afterwards to abolish the Election of GOD, seeming as though he would confess it, he answereth that God hath not created nor predestinated any man not to believe, seeing he calleth every one. Wherein he showed that he never yet learned the ABC of Christians, seeing he knows not how to distinguish between the outward preaching, which is done by the mouth of men, & the secret calling of God whereby he toucheth the hearts within. Now when it is commanded in the last of Mark, to preach the Gospel to all, this imports not that God therefore worketh in all by the power of his spirit: and when it is said in the second Chapter of the first to Timothy, that God would all men to be saved, the solution is added by and by, that come to the knowledge of his truth. Wherefore then is it, that he himself would not at that present time, that the gospel should be preached to all? so far off is it that he hath enlightened all the world in the faith. It is marvelous that this shameless forehead, is not ashamed to allege for himself the 10th to the Romans, where the text expressly sets forth that all believe not the Gospel, because that Isaiah saith, that the arm of the Lord is not revealed to all. Also the 6th chapter of S. John where Jesus Christ expressly pronounces, that all that are given him of his father come unto him. And touching that, that he saith, that all shall be taught of God: it is a special promise made to the Church: as also the Lord Jesus Christ was a faithful expositor thereof, saying: He therefore that has heard and learned of my father, shall come unto me. Whereby he shows, that all are not inwardly called. According as a little after also he confirms the same.

Therefore I have said unto you, that none can come unto me, unless it be given him from God my father. Notwithstanding this Rustick imagines he has well escaped, having spoken a word of predestination, without making any semblance of the text so expressly set forth, where it is said, that God will have mercy, upon whom he will have mercy, & that our salvation is of the same mercy: & not of the willer nor of the runner, and that before the two twins were born, when they had neither done good nor evil: to the end the purpose of his election might stand sure, he had chosen the one, & rejected the other. Also when we believe that this proceeds of that, that God has chosen us: Thereupon it follows, that the rest of the world remains blind. But because it would be too long to allege all, consider those places which are gathered in a little book that our brother master Beza has made thereof, and you shall be fully satisfied therein.

To show that the hardening of Pharaoh proceeded not of God, he alleges that which is said in the third and fourth of Exodus: "I have commanded thee, to let my people depart and thou wouldest not." But it follows not thereupon, that God had not ordained Pharaoh to be glorified in his obstinacy & hardness, as he protests, Exodus 9. chapter. And Saint Paul alleges it in this sense in the 9th chapter to the Romans. This therefore is sottishly concluded of this impudent fellow, that our will is the first and chief cause of evil. I confess indeed, that it is the near cause, and the true root of our condemnation. But to the end a man may grant him, he alleges the authority of Amerbachius, who is a lawyer, and as skillful a Divine, as a Apothecary is a good butcher.

Concerning Melancthon, if this Rustic rested not himself upon him, as he protests, but upon the Gospel, how proves he by the Gospel, that God hath not ordained of his creatures? Touching that he

imputes unto us, that we put a fatal necessity as the Stoics do, it is a very villainous slander: For the Stoics, they made god himself subject to such necessities, making a net of obscure causes, wherein God was entangled. But we set the Lord and master in full liberty, attributing the sovereign Empire to his providence, to dispose of all things. Concerning that this Clown babbles of Free will, it is sufficiently rejected throughout the whole Scripture. For Freedom and bondage are contraries. Now, that we are the servants, yea the slaves of sin, there needs not that we allege one place alone, seeing the whole Scripture is full thereof.

Notwithstanding, to give some color to his error, he alleges that Jerusalem would not receive the grace of God, yea as though this proved Free will, to choose good or evil. You shall find throughout all my books, how I have taught, that we must not seek the cause of our perdition anywhere else but in ourselves, and in our perverse will. But it follows not, that it is in us to change our will, which is altogether given to evil.

You shall also find that I have taught that which this trouble coast sets down here to put out the whole light: to wit, that our will is the cause or means to come to salvation. Wherefore it needs not to allege that Abraham believed God, & that it was imputed unto him for righteousness.

In very truth, it must needs be that a man must accept the grace of God. But the question is of knowing what is the first cause. And this is the power of the Holy Ghost, through which we are drawn to the obedience of God, according as he has chosen and adopted us for his children before the foundation of the world. Now, in this behalf, this vile dog shows sufficiently enough, that he makes no account of the holy scripture, which, as much as lies in him, he would abolish or

tread under his feet. For in going about to declare how Abraham was saved by his will, he says that this was of that will which God had put in man creating him after his own image. Whereby he utterly abolishes the whole grace of the Holy Ghost: and goes beyond not only the Papists, but also some of the Pagans, in this impiety.

For the Papists keep such a measure in magnifying their Free will, that they confess, being corrupted and depraved, we can do nothing, if God through his Spirit & supernatural grace, do not help, drive, and direct us. But concerning the holy scripture, it shows us that we shall always be rebels against God until he shall have changed & renewed us. And lo why Moses said to the people, Deuteronomy 29, that God had not yet given them an understanding heart, and seeing eyes. And therefore, to the end he might be obeyed, he says, that he would give them a new heart, taking away that stony heart. Jeremiah in the 31: Ezekiel in the 11 and 37: & St. Paul in the 2nd to the Philippians that God gives both to will and to perform. And in the first of St. John it is said, that they which believe, are not of the will of flesh nor blood: but renewed of God. And St. Luke speaking of the woman, shows well, how all are drawn unto faith: to wit, that God opens the heart, to the end his word may be understood.

Now it is certain that these things are not spoken of the common order of nature. And yet this villain dares to allege that which St. Paul says in the 3rd Chap. to Titus, that God has saved us not according to our works, but according to his mercy: to infer upon that, that we have Free will, but not so constant. Now when St. Paul speaks in the 3rd to the Romans of the will of man, such as it is by nature, he decipheres plainly enough that there is nothing but perversity and malice: as also in the 8th chap. he says, that all our thoughts are enmities to God.

Mark then how this agrees with that which this trouble coast chatters, saying that God renews us, after that we have consented to his calling. And he is not ashamed to allege to the same purpose the 5th to the Ephesians, where he speaks thereof as of the fables of Merlin: but contrariwise he says in the same epistle: When you were dead in your sins, and the captives of Satan, and that you were the children of wrath as others, God has quickened you, etc. And in the first chap. he shows well that faith and regeneration proceeded from no other thing, then Free election. And indeed, it must needs be that God accomplishes in us that which he has spoken by his prophet Isaiah, in the 66th chap. "I appeared unto them, which sought me not." And lo why John Baptist, reproving the rudeness and hardness of his disciples, says in the 3rd chap. of St. John. "No man can receive anything unless it be given him from heaven." And which is worst, this troubler is not ashamed also to bring this place, that God gives both to will and to perform, to make us believe that the grace of God follows our good will: howsoever it be that St. Paul in that place, without leaving anything to men, would attribute the whole praise of our salvation to God: as he says in the first chap. that he who has begun the good work of salvation, will finish it. Wherein it must be, that he makes the grace of God to come after the tail of Free will.

Now afterwards, this troublecoast takes great pain to prove that there is a will in man, as though any man had ever denied it. But he should show that that will is free to choose good and evil. Now how proves he it? By the 7th chap. to the Romans, that this place cannot be wrested. But herein men may easily judge how his mind is froward & perverse, seeing that S. Paul declares there, although his will labored and strived to good, inasmuch as it was regenerated by the spirit of God, yet oftentimes he went but hopping upon one foot. He alleges a little after the 7th of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, where he speaks of a man's will, that has a daughter to marry. Here is

good stuff to found Free will. Concerning the 30th of Deuteronomy, where it is said: "I set before you this day life & death, choose you," S. Paul in the 10th to the Romans gives a sufficient solution: that is, that Moses presupposes that God puts his word in the heart. And lo why it is said, that this ought to be laid to the gospel. Concerning that of Ecclesiasticus, which notwithstanding is Apocrypha, there he speaks but of the outward doctrine, but the inward grace is a thing apart and by itself. That which is so ill favoredly jumbled together by this troublecoast, that under the shadow that Jesus Christ calls all those that are heavy laden, he concludes that grace is given equally to all. But he makes no reckoning that Jesus Christ after he had preached more excellently than all creatures, says by and by, that his father must draw them to believe in him.

In the end, going about to solve that place of S. Paul where it is said, that if a potter makes vessels of earth as he sees good, this shows that God disposes of his creatures: I pray you mark well, the goodly solutions that he gives: that God ravishes by miracles, or diseases both one and other as seems good unto him. As if S. Paul spoke not expressly there, that God according to his unchangeable purpose, either chose or rejected men, before they were born, or before they had done either good or evil: to show that it is neither of the willer nor of the runner, but of his mercy, that his elect are saved. Such premises are worthy such a conclusion as he makes, let us draw near unto God, and consent unto him, and he will draw near unto us. As though the first approaching were not, that he should seek us out, whilst that we are far from him. It is true that God oftentimes uses this speech, "Return unto me, and I will come unto you," but this is to show what is our duty and not what our power is.

Praise be unto God.

FINIS.

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