

Election and Reprobation #11 Concerning Jacob and Esau

by John Calvin

Isaac's love for Esau blinded him to God's revelation and promise, but ultimately God used Isaac to dispense His blessing and bring about salvation.

Duration: 1:03:05

Scripture: Genesis 27:3

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, John Calvin focuses on the story of Isaac and his blessing of his elder son. He emphasizes the frailty of human life and the constant presence of death, which should serve as a reminder to live in accordance with God's will. Calvin also highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in opening our ears and enlightening us to understand the word of God. He emphasizes that salvation is a gift from Jesus Christ and not something that can be attributed to human power. Finally, Calvin connects the story of Isaac to the preaching of the gospel, stating that it is the power of God for the salvation of believers.

Transcript

The sermon we will hear today is the eleventh sermon from the book titled Sermons on Election and Reprobation. John Calvin preached this series of sermons beginning in September of 1559. The 1996 English edition by Old Paps Publications is the basis for the sermon as we will hear it today.

And so let us begin, Genesis chapter 27, verses 3 through 9. 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, Lo, here I am. Then he said, Behold now, I am waxed old, and I know not the day of my death.

Therefore take thy implements unto thee, I pray thee, thy bow and hammer, and go into the fields, and hunt some venison for me, 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. Now Rebekah heard Isaac when he spake thus unto Esau. Esau went therefore into the field to hunt venison, which he would bring.

But Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Lo, I heard thy father speaking unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and provide me some dainty dishes, which I may eat. Afterwards 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 necessarily be that the people which dwelt 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.

Know how Esau mingles himself amongst them whom God had already condemned. This therefore was a sign that he was 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 pleased 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 amongst 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 an help, and not two nor three. And further, when Eve was created, and that she was given to Adam, it is said in the book of Genesis chapter 2, verse 24, 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, yes, 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 in this 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 took therefore a second wife. But this was, as I have said, to pervert the order that God had established. He committed evil in that respect.

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 also committed incest 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 by that means before him.

Nowwithstanding, 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. Moreover, after when men come unto them, and say

to them, Why 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 twist, intertwine 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 despite 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 farther perverted the order and institution of marriage.

Yet despite this, 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 lacked much in that behalf, for he should have had his son, how old soever he had been, in detestation, forasmuch as he was so estranged from God. And becauseasmuch 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 had no matter of it to have two wives, and he would have had them by dozens if he had been able to have kept them.

When therefore he bears with these faults in his sons, 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 for what purpose, 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 bared to his eldest son, blinded him much more than his age, or the lack of his bodily senses. For he ought to have observed as the truth was, that God had preferred Jacob before Esau, and yet nevertheless he resists it, as we have seen before, when it is said that he loved Esau, and that Rebekah 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. Rebekah 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 to God. It is very certain that his purpose was not such, but he is in such manner 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 chased, pushes with his horns. So our appetites and desires drive us, and ravish us in such manner, that we make war most notoriously against God, yes, 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 of this, 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 in this, so false, that God is nothing in him.

He treads 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 passes beyond that.

Now this is a wonderful strange thing, for he was, despite this, the minister of God. And a prophet. And as soon as he had charged to give the blessing to him, to whom God had ordained it, yet he deals as if he had been the keeper and appointer of it.

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 your mouth. You shall be a messenger. Especially that which you pronounce shall have authority of justice.

It shall be authentic, which I will ratify in heaven. God had done him this honor. And yet, he leads himself to be so snared in ignorance, that he goes quite contrary, especially from his duty, and from that which his office required.

This at the first show would seem a thing intolerable. But God, who by his wonderful counsel, directed him in such sort in this manner, 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 his effect.

But because all things cannot be understood at once, let us follow that order in rehearsing of it, which Moses uses. And afterwards, we will gather in the end the prophet that this history brings unto us. It is said that Isaac, seeing himself now to draw towards his end, for as much as he was transitory, he says unto his son Esau, I know not the day of my death, and therefore go and hunt venison that thou mayest 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 knows 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 while they think to have some truces or some release. And what should this be if we knew certainly of the end of our life? Everyone would bend himself to all kind of evil, and God should be despised even to the end.

But when our Lord holds us at a disadvantage in such manner that from the womb of our mother we are always 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 minutes 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 we shall die.

But the meaning of these words is as I have said, namely, that Isaac knew well that he could not continue in the world. And indeed, although young people, and they which are strong, and in the flower of their age, ought to prepare themselves to forsake the world, and every hour to die, while they yet live, yet do we most fail in this, 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 weakened, 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 imports 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 manner that there be nothing that hold us or hinder 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 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 in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 20, The lesser was blessed of the greater, because it must necessarily 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 persons, not 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 us 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 were 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 same, 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 it 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 cocon that God will not lay our offenses to 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 in this as instruments, 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 which 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 to receive a morsel of bread and a drop of wine.

And indeed, this is well showed unto us when he says in the Gospel of John chapter 6, verse 51, 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 belong 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, desists not, to apply this to that. And thus it has been in all times.

For God has evermore reserved to himself the praise of man's salvation. But this hinders 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 the 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 in Romans chapter 1 verse 16. 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 speaks 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 knows 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 have not the doctrine that is preached unto us, knowing what it imports, for there are many fantastical men, these be the Anabaptists that refuse the ministry of the word, and will be taught immediately from God, 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 gives 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 has 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 of liberty? Lo, what these fantastical spirits say! Now they consider not that God is not tied and bound to men when He uses their service, for He does it as it seems good unto Him.

It is true that faith ordinarily comes by hearing, as St. Paul says, 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 has 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 among whom there is nothing but vanity, but He will have His truth esteemed for its own sake, and for its own nature. And in the meantime, let us have this sobriety and modesty in that respect, to submit ourselves to the order which He has established.

And thus, much concerning this word of blessing. Now here, Moses begins to rehearse how Rebecca found out a subtlety in the craft to rob Esau of his blessing, and to transfer it to Jacob. And after we have spoken of the vices of Isaac, we see the like in his wife Rebecca.

And yet, nevertheless, they both believed in God, despite that it was so darkened and wrapped up that it could hardly be discerned. That Isaac had a true faith, and this proceeded from a true zeal, it appears plainly. For if he had not been thoroughly persuaded of this 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 naught.

Isaac, therefore, must necessarily 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, namely, 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 sought all the time of his life against all the temptations which might have overthrown him, does yet in death persevere in faith and patience, and does this honor unto God, that he does boldly trust in him.

For whosoever trusts 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, despite this, he had no water to drink, as we have seen. Now, notwithstanding, death does threaten him, yet knows he not when it shall be, saving that he is altogether ready for it. And for all that he despises, both Satan and the world, and remains steadfast in this, that God will not deceive him.

And that it is all one to him, whether he die, or whether he rots in the ground, so that the truth of God may yet continue, and have his full virtue and power. Lo, Isaac then, who seeks not for the world, but forsakes all his senses, and remains steadfast, and doubts not, but that God hath mercy on him, and on his stock. In this, 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 willful malice, but it was because he was sluggish, and knew not his office but in part. He knows very well, that God would advance him to

such a dignity, that he might be the messenger, and witness of this blessing.

He knows this. And despite this, 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 profane through craft and lying. Yes, 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 proceeds 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 comes so foolishly, to attempt, that which seems good unto her, in so excellent a work of God, and which surmounts all others.

For Rebecca, knowing well, that the blessing which, she sought for her son Jacob, imported that he should be the head of the church, during his life, and that of him should come, our Lord Jesus Christ, does despite this overthrow it, that she cares not to lie, to falsify, to pervert all. And also it seems, that she sets 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, wrapped up about the neck of her son, and in the hands of skins, coloring that he is hairy, and seeming to rob Esau, of all his ornaments.

And again, that she makes her son to lie. And father Jacob, who went to seek a kid, which she causes to be fed, and makes 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 proceeds, from an excellent faith. If ever there were any.

This is very strange, but we may easily judge it. Where to 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.

Yes, which is more, she lays 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. Despite this, she sets 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 has printed this on 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, yes, even to the bowing of the knee. Now, although that this same birthright were worth nothing in respect of this world, yet does Rebecca greatly esteem it.

See then, undoubted and sure testimonies, of a great and exquisite fate 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, clothed in the undoubted marks of her faith.

She had so great zeal, that she forgot herself, and regarded not one bit, whatsoever mischief might come upon it. And why so? For as much 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, for as much as God has 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, regardless, we shall always be in such manner, wrapped up 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 truth, there is not anyone, which does not prove this to be true. For although that this be our mark, to strive, there where God has called us, yet do we make so many false steps, that it is great pity to see. And they which run more swiftly, to bring themselves in order to God, yet for all that, they go out of the way, and have many hurdles, and crossroads.

And God allows them to the end, that we should not have, with which to be proud. For if virtues themselves, be faulty before God, alas, what shall those vices be, which are altogether condemned? Do we labor to do well? Do we enforce ourselves to that? Yet regardless, 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, despite this, yet such clouds do often times, come before our eyes, and 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 offenses, 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 calls sacrifices of a sweet smelling savor, 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 has 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, while 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 works in such manner, that the evil which is in us, hinders Him not, to accomplish His work, even by our inferiority. As for example, if we will search, till we find, an angelical perfection, in a mortal man, there shall never any be found that has 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 offenses, although that they made intercession, for the people, and were as it were mediators, and that by their sacrifices, they abolished sins. Yet notwithstanding, they must 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 necessarily be, that the most excellent men, be examples unto us, of the fragility, 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 that they are full of imperfections. But let us learn, as I have said, in the person of Isaac, that God leads not off to accomplish his work, although there be yet ignorance in them, who out to lead us, who when they distribute unto us spiritual gifts, which they have committed unto them, and where God has made them keepers, although they be not all together, such as they ought to be, notwithstanding, we leave not off to make a profit of them.

For God uses and orders them, in such a way in this work, which he will do, that his grace is not a bit hindered, because a man might find things to be bettered in them. This therefore is the thing that we have, yes, to mark upon this place. But to be short, we see that the faith of the children of God, shall often times be weak and entangled, not as the papists have imagined, for they call an entangled faith beastliness, when a man shall say, Oh, I believe in my mother's God.

I know not what the whole Christianity means, but lo, it is enough for me to go simply to work, and I believe as our holy mother the church believes. 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 has planted them. See the implicit and penned up 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 held in ignorance.

But yet, despite this, there is some light, but what is that faith? It is an understanding, which we have, of the goodness and favor of God, after that, he has illuminated us by his Holy Spirit, and by his word. For faith cannot be without these two things. That is to say, without the word of God.

I say, as God has set in 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.

For as much 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, it is with us, that if God illuminate us not within, when he sends his holy word to show us the way, we should always remain as poor strays, or lost sheep. So then, it is necessary 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 have 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, namely, 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 has given us to know.

Now of this we may gather, that when the scripture pronounces that we are justified and saved by faith, it means not that it is by excellence 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, yes, but when there shall be never so little a spark, yet nevertheless shall the goodness of God supply that which is lacking, 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 mean season, where is our life? It is in us.

It is in us. How? In that we have received the Spirit of God, says St. Paul in the 18th chapter to the Romans, verses 1 through 27. And have we the Spirit of God in fullness? No, not so.

There is as it were but one spark, or a drop of it, but this, says he, is life, and shall swallow up all whatsoever belongs 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 a hundredth part of the benefits which God offers unto us, yes, 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 pacing 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 has declared that He will, our Father, that He will be our Father, that we embrace this promise and stay ourselves on that, and if there be any doubts or distrusts, that we resist them, and that we hold this conclusion, oh, 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 seems two great vices in Jacob. The one is that he feared his father more than God.

It is true that it might be so judged thereof, but when all shall be well marked, it is certain that it was the fear of God that moved him to that. 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 moat. But that all our actions should be condemned and that God should have them in utter decastation.

And St. Paul also pronounces it. For by this word of faith he understands certainly in the 14th chapter to the Romans that we be assured that that which 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 that 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 whatsoever he should have done being of

sin it should have been to provoke the wrath of God.

But we shall see by thou which followest that he was confirmed. But the answer which his mother gives him is, The curse be upon me. But he was not so lean and so dry as he or she has 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 be easily gathered that Jacob was confirmed to resolve himself and to know that the blessing which he sought could not be disappointed.

In the meantime, regardless, we cannot excuse him but that he fell foully even in the very beginning and consequently that he had nothing in that case but confusion had not God helped in that thing. To be short, we see as well in Jacob as in Isaac and 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 faults which are here, but God has outdone all their faults and defenses and wrought in such a way 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 our faults and beseeching him that he will open our eyes and 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 meanwhile that we may in such manner fight against all our carnal desires that in the end we may be full 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. Please stand with me. We'll pray together.

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