

# Election and Reprobation #9 Concerning Jacob and Esau

by John Calvin

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*God's appearance to Isaac signifies his presence and purpose in their life, and reminds us of the importance of trusting in his presence and promises.*

**Duration:** 56:16

**Scripture:** Genesis 26:23-25, Genesis 26:32-33, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Divine Sovereignty", "Faith And Suffering"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of meditating on God's word and holding onto His promises, even in the midst of suffering and afflictions. He encourages believers to submit to God's will and glorify Him sincerely, without any pretense or hypocrisy. The preacher also highlights the unity of faith and the blessings that come from God's favor, using the example of Isaac. He concludes by emphasizing that the testimony of God's mercy and love is more valuable than any worldly possessions or pleasures.

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## Transcript

Today we'll be hearing the ninth sermon of Jacob and Esau from the book Sermons on Election and Reprobation by John Calvin. And the text he uses today is from the book of Genesis chapter 26, starting in verse 23, reading from the translation he provided for us. Afterwards, he went up into Beersheba, and Jehovah appeared unto him in the same night, saying, I am the God of Abraham thy father.

Fear not, for I am with thee, and I will bless thee, and will multiply thy seed for Abraham my servant's sake. Therefore he having builded an altar there, he called upon the name of Jehovah, and there he pitched his tent, and there the servants of Isaac digged a well. We saw yesterday that Isaac, to witness that he felt in the end that God had helped him, called the wells which he enjoyed peaceably, Generosities, or Bounties.

Now by that which Moses adds, it appears that he enjoyed this not very long, for it is said that he withdrew himself into Beersheba, the place where Abraham his father had dwelt before. We know that if he had not been constrained, he would not have gone from the place where he had convenience, for there was no such nimbleness in him to cause him to trot up and down to this place and that place, but that necessity constrained him so to do. We have therefore to bear away that God would always exercise him, and that he was not contented that he should dwell in the land of Canaan as a stranger without one foot of ground

in possession, but moreover he led him up and down as we have seen up to this time, wherein we are taught always to be, as is said, as a bird upon a sprig, that know not which way to fly, and if God maintained us in that case for our infirmity, that we dwell in a certain place and rest there, yet must we not there so nestle ourselves, as if our assured rest were there, but we must learn in this point to be fleeting, as St. Paul also used the same word.

For to whatever degree or extent Christians that must have their foundation and seat so stable, that amidst all storms and tempests they never change and vary, yet regardless of this as concerning their dwelling, they must be fleeting and have no resting place, unless they be lodged from day to day, as it were, by the hand of God, and in the mean season that they prepare themselves to wander and go from place to place after the example of their fathers, who learned by experience not to have their inheritance here beneath upon earth, and confess 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 dwells 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 in whatever manner it be, God hurt him not at the first stach. We have then to learn here that which was touched yesterday, that is that we learn to endure need, yes in the need of water, and 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 for as much as he had need to be aided and comforted by reason of his great heaviness 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 never the less ceases not to show himself unto us, when he sees that we can bear no more and that we will like to fail unless he reach forth his helping hand to sustain us.

How often so ever we are in distress, we think that God has estranged himself from us, and we imagine that he has utterly forgotten us. But to the contrary, when he makes us to taste his favor, in what way or manner so ever it be, or rather that he does strengthen us and that we fight valiantly against all temptation, or rather that he delivers us from the wrongs and afflictions 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 appears to Isaac, that it must necessarily be that he had been in some great necessity, for this happened not every day, and on that matter let us learn to hold ourselves contented when God, after that he has suffered us to be tormented, to be disturbed, troubled, and persecuted, 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 to the contrary he then sees himself quite destitute of all help, 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 mean season, let us mark also that one only word which God shall speak unto us, witness the love which he bears unto us, will be better worth unto us than all the goods which we can have. Yes, 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 heart's 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 lacked nothing. Yet in spite of this, if he knew not, if he know 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 with that, that he think that his prosperity shall yet continue with him, what may it be to have after this manner all his happiness 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 favor, unless we be assured of the favor of God.

But on the other hand, 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, to whatever degree or extent 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 manner 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 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, of which 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 to that, 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 prevents 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. Yes, 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 a 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 is necessary therefore that God have regard what we are able to bear when it pleases him to appear unto us, and so let us mark that 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 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 virtue of the word which shall afterwards be added fight against whatsoever evil might happen unto him. Now it is said that God exhorts him that he should not fear, and he gives him a reason why.

I am, says 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 to whatever degree or extent 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 regardless of this.

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 and 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 immeasurably afraid as we used to be unless we have our rest upon God.

For the least blast of wind in the world was enough to shake us, and to make us so at our wits end that we cannot tell which was to turn us. 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 implies where it is said, fear not. That is to say, to whatever degree or extent we have occasion to fear and to be astonished, yet let us resist, and wait with patience till God shall help us. And let not this fear oppress us, and quite stifle us, but let us endeavor to recover ourselves, and keep the right path.

And even though we be anxious, and tossed hither and 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. Yes, and that it seems that all creatures have conspired against us.

Now withstanding, so that God take our part, it shall make us to overcome all fear. And indeed, we see how the prophet David in Psalm chapter 3 says, he, verses 6 and 7, did practice this doctrine, and St. Paul also gives us example thereof, seeing God, says he, is for me. I will not fear, though I were compassed

about with a 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 23rd Psalm, O Lord, thy hook, that is to say, the staff which thou erect as a shepherd, for he takes his similitude from the shepherd, who will have his staff or his hook to lead his sheep. Lord, says he, so that I may have some sign to assure me, that thou accountest 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 which 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 it that St. Paul teaches us in Romans chapter 8 verse 31. 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 says, 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 to the contrary we have to mark that without it, we are always as a people that are even swooning. And this also is that which we have touched up to this time, namely, 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 to the contrary, 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 assured of his aid, and 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 he 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 of necessity tremble, and be always shaken on every side, and have many pricks to trouble and torment him, without knowing any cause why, and that very often he shall be in great perplexity, lo then in what case the unborn believers are, not that they are not bold enough, yes, even to despise God, for it seems to them that they are escaped his hand, and that if he should thunder from heaven, that he cannot touch them. The wicked then, and those that are despisers 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 what source 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 happiness 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 treasures, rather 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 any way rest upon them, that we turn away from him. And but rather let us learn to 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 conversely, when we shall imagine to be assured without the protection of God, it must of necessity be that he show us what our folly and high opinion is. And this briefly is that which we have to bear away in this place.

And so let us join these two things together as inseparable, and not to be separated, 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 cease not to comfort ourselves, knowing well that death shall be turned to us unto life, and 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 to 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 is necessary for 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 filthiness and errors, for they have that from other fathers and ancestors which they follow. They have not invented it at this day.

It seems therefore unto them that this is enough to beat back, yes, even whatsoever God himself has showed by his word, so that they follow their fathers and elders. Well, but when God is named the God of Abraham, he presupposed this one thing, namely that Abraham had a faith ruled by the doctrine which had been taught him. And wherefore is it that he names not himself the God of Nachor? And why is it that he calls not himself the God of Phair? For this had been somewhat more.

The Papists will not say it is a 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 seems 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 Phair and 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 recently. The others had been a great deal more ancient. What distinction shall we make here? We must not forge it according to our brain, but we must

look unto that mark whereunto God would direct Isaac.

There is no doubt what this was, because Abraham, as we have said already in 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 depends, as St. Paul says, then must we shut our eyes. For when God has 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 what 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 in chapter 20, verse 18, walk not in the righteousness of your fathers. And why so? These fathers followed not Abraham's steps, but departed from them. And therefore they were no longer worthy of so honorable a title of fathers, for as much as they were not, had a very word, the children of God.

And let us fear, lest that be spoken unto us, that St. Stephen has spoken in the book of Acts, chapter 7, verse 51, 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 up 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 brothel, as they take all those for their fathers, who have perverted and corrupted the simplicity both of the law and the gospel. Namely these foolish talkers, imbeciles and rebels of friars and monks, who have been the falsifiers of the Holy Scripture. To the end, therefore, we be not in such manner bereaved and spoiled of our senses.

Let us know that our fathers must be the children of God, of whom depends all parentage, as we have alleged out of St. 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 him 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 there. 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 a count ought we to make of all the rest of the faithful. For although they not one bit 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, verse one, 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, says he, a great and thick cloud of witnesses who calls us to God. That would seem as if a man would say, to stop our eyes. We will be offended with a man when he shall seduce us.

We will imagine to be excused by saying, oh, he did in our respect as much as I. We need no more but a small fly to make us to turn away from the fear of God. 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, and we shall have frustrations of ignorance, as it were storms, let us think.

And what? Has God begun but yesterday and today to speak? Spoke 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 and prophets and others, were they not so many witnesses whom God showed unto us? Let us therefore join them to this holy assembly now. For how often soever the apostle has entreated of it, it is not only to gather us together with all the faithful which are living at this day, but also into the fellowship and company of all the holy spirits whom God has taken out of this world. We are therefore at this day joined in fellowship with all the holy prophets, as often as God speaks unto 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 unto us, and in a more familiar sort, 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 whatsoever is profitable unto us for our salvation, in this lively image in whom God 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 a hundred thousand times, yet nevertheless that we should remain steadfast in that which 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 know that word of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he says in the Gospel of John chapter 20 verse 17, 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, and 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, oh, I know what to hold. There are so many various opinions that I am confounded, and 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 together, 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 aboud us for his children. Now we have to know 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 his 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 in whatever manner it be, prosperity shall always be coupled with the favor and love of God. Now we know that he has all in his hand, and he is no covetous stingy miser that he will not give to his children whatsoever he knows to be appropriate 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 already said. And in the meanwhile notwithstanding, although that we have many adversities which trouble and persecute us, and that they be hard and 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 have always good cause to honor him and to rejoice ourselves in him. But alack, we devour up the benefits that he bestows upon us, and in the meanwhile we move at them and never think upon them, and we may see the cause that we are so given to murmur, to fret, and 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 and set lightly 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 later 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 hinders 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, that they 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 occupies himself with no ceremonies, and yet for all that we bow our knees, we hold up our hands towards heaven, and uncover the head.

And why so? First of all, in respect of men. For as I have already said, it must of necessity 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, to whatever degree or extent it be, for as much as we are slack, it is advantageous for us that these means stand us instead to provoke us to have a more fervent zeal to pray unto God, and with a more hearty affection.

Lo then, why it is very proper of 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 are you? With what lowliness ought you to come before him, who has created and fashioned you, and to whom you have to render an account of your 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, namely, that by this means he might be the more provoked, and have his heart so much the more inflamed to serve God. As 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, heathen, 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 has taken our nature upon him, and has said unto us in the gospel of John chapter 8 verse 12, chapter 14 verse 6, and 1 John chapter 2 verse 1, that he is the light of the world, that he is the way, the truth, and the life, that he is our advocate, and 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 opened for us, and that we shall always find him ready and favorable to help and assist us. Now howsoever it be, let us mark that altars in old time, and especially 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 the 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 righteous 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, heathen, had indeed their altars and sacrificed as did the holy fathers, but they lacked the principle.

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 profaned and defiled. But when the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be applied therein, certainly our prayers shall be kept pure, they shall be consecrated in such way that God will accept of them. And when we shall call upon God, every one in the secret of his own heart, let us labor also to draw our neighbors to that, 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 holy, he is. 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. For as much as we should justly be condemned by his judgment and that it will please him to strengthen us so as we faint not whatsoever miseries we have to suffer in this world.

But we may meditate in his word in such sort that the only promise which he has 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, pretending 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. Let's stand together and borrow hearts in prayer.

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