

Genesis 27:1-46

by John Calvin

John Calvin's sermon on Genesis 27 explores the complexities of Isaac's blessing, the role of divine election, and the consequences of familial deception.

Scripture: Genesis 27:33-46, Hebrews 12:17

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Faith And Obedience"

Description

Rebekah's faith and determination to secure the blessing for Jacob, despite the deceitful means used, demonstrate her trust in God's promise and providence. Isaac's unwitting role in blessing Jacob instead of Esau reveals the divine sovereignty at work, even through human error. Esau's reaction of hatred and murderous intent towards Jacob exposes his lack of repentance and faith, leading to his exclusion from the covenant blessings. Jacob's departure to Mesopotamia under Rebekah's guidance exemplifies the sacrifices made for the sake of God's promises, showing the importance of faith and obedience in fulfilling God's plan.

Transcript

1. And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I.

1. Fuit autem quum senuisset Ishac, et caligassent oculi ejus ita ut non videret, vocavit Esau filium suum majorem, et dixit ad eum, Fili mi. Et dixit ad eum, Ecce adsum.

2. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

2. Et dixit, Ecce nunc senui: non novi diem quo moriar.

3. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison;

3. Nunc igitur cape quaeso instrumenta tua, pharetram tuam, et arcum tuum, et egredere in agrum, et venare mihi venationem.

4. And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

4. Et fac mihi cibos sapos, quemadmodum diligo, et affer mihi, et comedam: ut benedicat tibi anima mea antequam moriar.

5. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it

5. Ribca autem audiebat, dum loqueretur Ishac ad Esau filium suum: et perrexit Esau in agrum, ut venaretur venationem, ut afferret.

6. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

6. Tunc Ribca dixit ad Iahacob filium suum, dicendo, Ecce, audivi patrem tuum loquentem ad Esau fratrem tuum, dicendo, Ecce, audivi patrem tuum loquentem ad Esau fratrem tuum, dicendo,

7. Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.

7. Affer mihi venationem, et fac mihi cibos, et comedam, et benedicam tibi coram Domino antequam moriar.

8. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

8. Nunc igitur, fili mi, obedi voci neae in eo quod praecipio tibi.

9. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

9. Vade nunc ad pecudes, et cape mihi inde duos hoedos caprarum bonos, et faciam ex eis escas sapos patri tuo, quemadmodum diligit.

10. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

10. Et afferes patri tuo, et comedet, ut benedicat tibi antequam moriatur.

11. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man:

11. Et dixit Iahacob ad Ribcam matrem suam, Ecce Esau frater meus est vir pilosus, et ego vir laevis:

12. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

12. Si forte palpaverit me pater meus, ero in oculis ejus tanquam illusor: et venire faciam super me maledictionem et non benedictionem.

13. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them

13. Tunc dixit ei mater ejus, Super me sit maledictio tua, fili mi: veruntamen obedi voci meae et vade, cape mihi.

14. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

14. Profectus est itaque, et accepit, et attulit matri suae, et fecit mater ejus cibos sapos, quemadmodum diligebat pater ejus.

15. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

15. Et accepit Ribca vestes Esau filii sui majoris delectabiles, quae erant apud se in domo, et induit lahacob filium suum minorem.

16. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

16. Et pelles hoedorum caprarum circumdedit manibus ejus, et laevitati colli ejus.

17. And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

17. Deditque cibos sapos et panem, quos paraverat, in manu lahacob filii sui.

18. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son?

18. Venit ergo ad patrem suum, et dixit, Pater mi. Ille autem respondit, Ecce adsum: qui es, fili mi?

19. And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

19. Et dixit lahacob ad patrem suum, Ego sum Esau primogenitus tuus, feci quemadmodum loquutus es ad me: surge nunc, sede, et comede de venatione mea, ut benedicat mihi anima tua.

20. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me.

20. Et dixit Ishac ad filium suum, Quid hoc quod festinasti ad inveniendum, fili mi? Cui respondit, Quia occurrere fecit lehova Deus tuus coram me.

21. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not.

21. Tunc dixit Ishac ad Iacob, Appropinqua nunc, et palpabo te, fili mi, utrum sis ipse filius meus Esau, an non.

22. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

22. Et appropinquavit lahacob Ishac patri suo: qui palpavit eum, et dixit, Vox vox lahacob est: at manus, manus Esau.

23. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

23. Et non agnovit eum: quia erant manus ejus sicut manus Esau fratris sui pilosae: et benedixit ei:

24. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am

24. Et dixit, Tu es ipse filius meus Esau? Respondit, Sum.

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

25. Tunc dixit, Admove mihi, et comedam de venatione filii mei, ut benedicat tibi anima mea. Et admovit ei, et comedit: attulitque ei vinum, et babit.

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

26. Et dixit ad eum Ishac pater ejus, Appropinqua nunc, et osculare me, fili mi.

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

27. Et appropinquavit, et osculatus est eum: et odoratus est odorem vestimentorum ejus: et benedixit ei, et dixit, Vide, odorem filii mei sicut odorem agri, cui benedixit lehova.

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

28. Et det tibi Deus de rore coeli, et de pinguedinibus terrae, et multitudinem frumenti et musti novi.

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

29. Serviant tibi populi, et incurvent se tibi populi: esto dominus fratribus tuis, et incurvent se tibi filii matris tuae: maledicentes tibi, maledicti erunt, et benedicentes tibi, benedicti.

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

30. Et fuit, quando complevit Ishac benedicere lahacob: fuit, inquam, tantum egrediendo egressus erat lahacob a facie Ishac patris sui, tunc Esau frater ejus venit a venatione sua.

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

31. Et fecit etiam ipse cibos sapos, et attulit patri suo: dixitque patri suo, Surgat pater meus, et comedat de venatione filii sui, ut benedicat mihi anima tua.

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

32. Et dixit ei Ishac Pater ejus, Quis es? Ille respondit, Ego sum filius tuus, primogenitus tuus Esau.

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

33. Et expavit Ishac pavore magno vehementissime, et dixit, Quis est, et ubi est qui venatus est venationem, et attulit mihi, et comedi ex omnibus antequam venires? et benedixi ei, etiam benedictus erit.

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

34. Quum audisset Esau verba patris sui, clamavit clamore magno, et amaro valde valde, dixitque patri suo, Benedic mihi: etiam ego filius tuus sum, pater mi.

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

35. Et dixit, Venit frater tuus dolose et accepit benedictionem tuam.

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

36. Dixit ergo, Vere vocatum est nomen ejus Iahacob, quia supplantavit me jam duabus vicibus: primogenituram meam accepit, et ecce nunc accepit benedictionem mean. Et dixit, Annon reservasti mihi apud te benedictionem?

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

37. Et respondit Ishac, et dixit ad Esau, Ecce, dominum posui eum tibi, et omnes fratres ejus dedi ei in servos, frumentumque et vinum addixi ei: et tibi nunc quid faciam, filii mi?

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

38. Tunc dixit Esau ad patrem suum, Numquid benedictio una est tibi, pater mi? benedic mihi, et etiam ego filius tuus, pater mi: et elevavit Esau vocem suam et flevit.

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

39. Tunc respondit Ishac pater ejus, et dixit ad eum, Ecce, de pinguedinibus terrae erit habitatio tua et de rore coeli desuper.

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

40. Et in gladio tuo vives, et fratri tuo servies: et erit, quando dominaberis, franges jugum ejus a collo tuo.

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

41. Itaque odio habuit Esau Iahacob propter benedictionem, qua benedixerat ei pater ejus: et cogitavit Esau in corde suo, Appropinquabunt dies luctus patris mei, et occidam Iahacob fratrem meum.

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

42. Et nuntiata sunt Ribcae verba Esau filii sui majoris: et misit, et vocavit Iahacob filium suum minorem, et dixit ad eum, Ecce, Esau frater tuus consolatur se super te, ut occidat te.

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

43. Et nunc fili mi, obedi voci meae, et surge, et fuge ad Laban fratrem meum in Charan.

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

44. Et habita cum eo dies aliquot, donec avertatur furor fratris tui a te.

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

45. Donec avertatur ira fratris tui a te, et obliviscatur eorum quae fecisti ei: et mittam, et accipiam te inde: utquid orbabor etiam ambobus vobis die una?

46. And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

46. Et dixit Ribca ad Ishac, Angustiis affecta sum in vita mea propter filias Heth: si acceperit Iahacob uxorem de filiabus Heth, sicut istas de filiabus terrae, utquid est mihi vita?

1. And it came to pass that when Isaac was old. In this chapter Moses prosecutes, in many words, a history which does not appear to be of great utility. It amounts to this; Esau having gone out, at his father's command, to hunt; Jacob, in his brother's clothing, was, by the artifice of his mother, induced to obtain by stealth the blessing due by the right of nature to the firstborn. It seems even like child's play to present to his father a kid instead of venison, to feign himself to be hairy by putting on skins, and, under the name of his brother, to get the blessing by a lie.

But in order to learn that Moses does not in vain pause over this narrative as a most serious matter, we must first observe, that when Jacob received the blessing from his father, this token confirmed to him the oracle by which the Lord had preferred him to his brother. For the benediction here spoken of was not a mere prayer but a legitimate sanction, divinely interposed, to make manifest the grace of election. God had promised to the holy fathers that he would be a God to their seed for ever.

They, when at the point of death, in order that the succession might be secured to their posterity, put them in possession, as if they would deliver, from hand to hand, the favor which they had received from God. So Abraham, in blessing his son Isaac, constituted him the heir of spiritual life with a solemn rite. With the same design, Isaac now, being worn down with age, imagines himself to be shortly about to depart this life, and wishes to bless his firstborn son, in order that the everlasting covenant of God may remain in his own family.

The Patriarchs did not take this upon themselves rashly, or on their own private account, but were public and divinely ordained witnesses. To this point belongs the declaration of the Apostle, "the less is blessed

of the better." (Heb 7:7.) For even the faithful were accustomed to bless each other by mutual offices of charity; but the Lord enjoined this peculiar service upon the patriarchs, that they should transmit, as a deposit to posterity, the covenant which he had struck with them, and which they kept during the whole course of their life.

The same command was afterwards given to the priests, as appears in Nu 6:24, and other similar places. Therefore Isaac, in blessing his son, sustained another character than that of a father or of a private person, for he was a prophet and an interpreter of God, who constituted his son an heir of the same grace which he had received. Hence appears what I have already said, that Moses, in treating of this matter, is not without reason thus prolix. But let us weigh each of the circumstances of the case in its proper order; of which this is the first, that God transferred the blessing of Esau to Jacob, by a mistake on the part of the father; whose eyes, Moses tells us, were dim.

The vision also of Jacob was dull when he blessed his grandchildren Ephraim and Manasseh; yet his want of sight did not prevent him from cautiously placing his hands in a transverse direction. But God suffered Isaac to be deceived, in order to show that it was not by the will of man that Jacob was raised, contrary to the course of nature, to the right and honor of primogeniture.

2. Behold, now I am old, I know not the day of my death. There is not the least doubt that Isaac implored daily blessings on his sons all his life: this, therefore, appears to have been an extraordinary kind of benediction. Moreover, the declaration that he knew not the day of his death, is as much as if he had said, that death was every moment pressing so closely upon him, a decrepit and failing man, that he dared not promise himself any longer life. Just as a woman with child when the time of parturition draws near, might say, that she had now no day certain. Every one, even in the full vigor of age, carries with him a thousand deaths. Death claims as its own the foetus in the mother's womb, and accompanies it through every stage of life. But as it urges the old more closely, so they ought to place it more constantly before their eyes, and should pass as pilgrims through the world, or as those who have already one foot in the grave. In short, Isaac, as one near death, wishes to leave the Church surviving him in the person of his son.

4. That my soul may bless thee. Wonderfully was the faith of the holy man blended with a foolish and inconsiderate carnal affection. The general principle of faith flourishes in his mind, when, in blessing his son, he consigns to him, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the right of the inheritance which had been divinely promised to himself. Meanwhile, he is blindly carried away by the love of his firstborn son, to prefer him to the other; and in this way he contends against the oracle of God. For he could not be ignorant of that which God had pronounced before the children were born. If any one would excuse him, inasmuch as he had received no command from God to change the accustomed order of nature by preferring the younger to the elder; this is easily refuted: because when he knew that the firstborn was rejected, he still persisted in his excessive attachment. Again, in neglecting to inquire respecting his duty, when he had been informed of the heavenly oracle by his wife, his indolence was by no means excusable. For he was not altogether ignorant of his calling; therefore, his obstinate attachment to his son was a kind of blindness, which proved a greater obstacle to him than the external dimness of his eyes. Yet this fault, although deserving of reprehension, did not deprive the holy man of the right of pronouncing a blessing; but plenary authority remained with him, and the force and efficacy of his testimony stood entire, just as if God himself had spoken from heaven; to which subject I shall soon again allude.

5. And Rebekah heard. Moses now explains more fully the artifice by which Jacob attained the blessing. It truly appears ridiculous, that an old man, deceived by the cunning of his wife, should, through ignorance

and error, have given utterance to what was contrary to his wish. And surely the stratagem of Rebekah was not without fault; for although she could not guide her husband by salutary counsel, yet it was not a legitimate method of acting, to circumvent him by such deceit. For, as a lie is in itself culpable, she sinned more grievously still in this, that she desired to sport in a sacred matter with such wiles. She knew that the decree by which Jacob had been elected and adopted was immutable; why then does she not patiently wait till God shall confirm it in fact, and shall show that what he had once pronounced from heaven is certain? Therefore, she darkens the celestial oracle by her lie, and abolishes, as far as she was able, the grace promised to her son. Now, if we consider farther, whence arose this great desire to bestir herself; her extraordinary faith will on the other hand appear. For, as she did not hesitate to provoke her husband against herself, to light up implacable enmity between the brothers, to expose her beloved son Jacob to the danger of immediate death, and to disturb the whole family; this certainly flowed from no other source than her faith. 42 The inheritance promised by God was firmly fixed in her mind; she knew that it was decreed to her son Jacob. And therefore, relying upon the covenant of God, and keeping in mind the oracle received, she forgets the world. Thus, we see, that her faith was mixed with an unjust and immoderate zeal. This is to be carefully observed, in order that we may understand that a pure and distinct knowledge does not always so illuminate the minds of the pious as to cause them to be governed, in all their actions, by the Holy Spirit, but that the little light which shows them their path is enveloped in various clouds of ignorance and error; so that while they hold a right course, and are tending towards the goal, they yet occasionally slide. Finally, both in Isaac and in his wife the principle of faith was preeminent. But each, by ignorance in certain particulars, and by other faults, either diverged a little from the way, or, at least, stumbled in the way. But seeing that, nevertheless, the election of God stood firm; nay, that he even executed his design through the deceit of a woman, he vindicates, in this manner, the whole praise of his benediction to his own gratuitous goodness.

11. And Jacob said to Rebekah. That Jacob does not voluntarily present himself to his father, but rather fears lest, his imposture being detected, he should bring a curse upon himself, is very contrary to faith. 43 For when the Apostle teaches, that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," (Ro 14:23,) he trains the sons of God to this sobriety, that they may not permit themselves to undertake anything with a doubtful and perplexed conscience. This firm persuasion is the only rule of right conduct, when we, relying on the command of God, go intrepidly wheresoever he calls us. Jacob, therefore, by debating with himself, shows that he was deficient in faith; and certainly, although he was not entirely without it, yet, in this point, he is convicted of failure. But by this example we are again taught, that faith is not always extinguished by a given fault; yet, if God sometimes bears with his servants thus far, that he turns, what they have done perversely, to their salvation, we must not hence take a license to sin. It happened by the wonderful mercy of God, that Jacob was not cut off from the grace of adoption. Who would not rather fear than become presumptuous? And whereas we see that his faith was obscured by doubting, let us learn to ask of the Lord the spirit of prudence to govern all our steps. There was added another error of no light kind: for why does he not rather reverence God than dread his father's anger? Why does it not rather occur to his mind, that a foul blot would stain the hallowed adoption of God, when it seemed to owe its accomplishment to a lie? For although it tended to a right end, it was not lawful to attain that end, through this oblique course. Meanwhile, there is no doubt that faith prevailed over these impediments. For what was the cause why he preferred the bare and apparently empty benediction of his father, 44 to the quiet which he then enjoyed, to the conveniences of home, and finally to life itself? According to the flesh, the father's benediction, of which he was so desirous, that he knowingly and willingly plunged himself into great difficulties, was but an imaginary thing. Why did he act thus, but because in the exercise of simple faith in the word of God, he more highly valued the hope which was hidden from him, shall the desirable condition which he actually

enjoyed? Besides, his fear of his father's anger had its origin in the true fear of God. He says that he feared lest he should bring upon himself a curse. But he would not so greatly have dreaded a verbal censure, if he had not deemed the grace deposited in the hands of his father worth more than a thousand lives. It was therefore under an impulse of God that he feared his father, who was really God's minister. For when the Lord sees us creeping on the earth, he draws us to himself by the hand of man. 45

13. Upon me be thy curse, my son. Here Rebekah sins again, because she burns with such hasty zeal that she does not consider how highly God disapproves of her evil course. She presumptuously subjects herself to the curse. But whence this unheeding confidence? Being unfurnished with any divine command, she took her own counsel. Yet no one will deny that this zeal, although preposterous, proceeds from special reverence for the word of God. For since she was informed by the oracle of God, that Jacob was preferred in the sight of God, she disregarded whatever was visible in the world, and whatever the sense of nature dictated, in comparison with God's secret election. Therefore we are taught by this example, that every one should walk modestly and cautiously according to the rule of his vocation; and should not dare to proceed beyond what the Lord allows in his word.

14. And he went and fetched. Although it is probable that Jacob was not only influenced by a desire to yield obedience to the authority of his mother, but was also persuaded by her seasonings, he yet sinned by overstepping the bounds of his vocation. When Rebekah had taken the blame upon herself, she told him, doubtless, that injury was done to no one: because Jacob was not stealing away another's right, but only seeking the blessing which was decreed to him by the celestial oracle. It seemed a fair and probable excuse for the fraud, that Isaac, unless he should be imposed upon, was prepared to invalidate the election of God. Therefore Jacob, instead of simply declining from what was right in submission to his mother, was rather obeying the word of God. In the meantime (as I have said) this particular error was not free from blame: because the truth of God was not to be aided by such falsehoods. The paternal benediction was a seal of God's grace, I confess it; but she ought rather to have waited till God should bring relief from heaven, by changing the mind and guiding the tongue of Isaac, than have attempted what was unlawful. For if Balaam, who prostituted his venal tongue, was constrained by the Spirit, contrary to his own wish, to bless the elect people, whom he would rather have devoted to destruction, (Nu 22:12,) how much more powerfully would the same spirit have influenced the tongue of holy Isaac, who was not a mercenary man, but one who desired faithfully to obey God, and was only hurried by an error in a contrary direction? Therefore, although in the main, faith shone preeminently in holy Jacob, yet in this respect he bears the blame of rashness, in that he was distrustful of the providence of God, and fraudulently gained possession of his father's blessing.

19. And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau 46 At first Jacob was timid and anxious; now, having dismissed his fear, he confidently and audaciously lies. By which example we are taught, that when any one has transgressed the proper bounds of duty, he soon allows himself unmeasured license. Wherefore there is nothing better than for each to keep himself within the limits divinely prescribed to him, lest by attempting more than is lawful, he should open the door to Satan. I have before shown how far his seeking the blessing by fraud, and insinuating himself into the possession of it by falsehood, was contrary to faith. Yet this particular fault and divergence from the right path, did not prevent the faith which had been produced by the oracle from holding on, in some way, its course. In excusing the quickness of his return by saying that the venison was brought to him by God, he speaks in accordance with the rule of piety: he sins, however, in mixing the sacred name of God with his own falsehoods. Thus, when there is a departure from truth, the reverence which is apparently shown to God is nothing else than a profanation of

his glory. It was right that the prosperous issue of his hunting should be ascribed to the providence of God, lest we should imagine that any good thing was the result of chance; but when Jacob pretended that God was the author of a benefit which had not been granted to himself, and that, too, as a cloak for his deception, his fault was not free from perjury.

21. Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee. It hence appears that the holy man was suspicious of fraud, and therefore hesitated. Whence it may seem that the benediction was vain, seeing it had no support of faith. But it thus pleased God so to perform his work by the hand of Isaac, as not to make him, who was the instrument, a willing furtherer of his design. Nor is it absurd that Isaac, like a blind man, should ignorantly transfer the blessing to a different person from him whom he intended. The ordinary function of pastors has something of a similar kind; for since by the command of God, they reconcile men to him, yet they do not discern to whom this reconciliation comes; thus they cast abroad the seed, but are uncertain respecting the fruit. Wherefore God does not place the office and power with which he has invested them, under the control of their own judgment. In this way the ignorance of Isaac does not nullify the heavenly oracles; and God himself, although the senses of his servant fail, does not desist from the accomplishment of his purpose. Here we have a clear refutation of the figment of the Papists, that the whole force of the sacrament depends upon the intention of the man who consecrates; as if, truly, it were left to the will of man to frustrate the design of God. Nevertheless, what I have already so often said must be remembered, that however Isaac might be deceived in the person of his son, he yet did not pronounce the blessing in vain: because a general faith remained in his mind and in part governed his conduct. In forming his judgment from the touch, disregarding the voice, he did not act according to the nature of faith. And, therefore, with respect to the person, he was plainly in error. This, however, did not happen in consequence of negligence; since he diligently and even anxiously turned every way, that he might not deprive the firstborn of his right. But it pleased the Lord thus to render his senses dull, partly for the purpose of showing, how vain it is for men to strive to change what he has once decreed, (because it is impossible but that his counsel should remain firm and stable though the whole world should oppose it,) and partly, for the purpose of correcting, by this kind of chastisement, the absurd attachment by which Isaac was too closely bound to his firstborn. For whence arose this minute investigation, except from the fact that an inordinate love of Esau, which had taken entire possession of his mind, turned him aside from the divine oracle? Therefore, since he yielded an excessive indulgence to natural feeling, he deserved in every way to be blinded. So much the greater care ought we to take that, in carrying on God's work, we should not give the reins to our human affections.

26. Come near now, and kiss me. We know that the practice of kissing was then in use, which many nations retain to this day. Profane men, however, may say, that it is ludicrous for an old man, whose mind was already obtuse, and who moreover had eaten and drunk heartily, should pour forth his benedictions upon a person who was only acting a part. 47 But whereas Moses has previously recorded the oracle of God, by which the adoption was destined for the younger son, it behoves us reverently to contemplate the secret providence of God, towards which profane men pay no respect. Truly Isaac was not so in bondage to the attractions of meat and drink as to be unable, with sobriety of mind, to reflect upon the divine command given unto him, and to undertake in seriousness, and with a certain faith in his own vocation, the very work in which, on account of the infirmity of his flesh, he vacillated and halted. Therefore, we must not form our estimate of this blessing from the external appearance, but from the celestial decree; even as it appeared at length, by the issue, that God neither vainly sported, nor that man rashly proceeded in this affair: and, truly, if the same religion dwells in us which flourished in the patriarch's heart, nothing will hinder the divine power from shining forth the more clearly in the weakness of man.

27. See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field. The allegory of Ambrose on this passage is not displeasing to me. Jacob, the younger brother, is blessed under the person of the elder; the garments which were borrowed from his brother breathe an odour grateful and pleasant to his father. In the same manner we are blessed, as Ambrose teaches, when, in the name of Christ, we enter the presence of our Heavenly Father: we receive from him the robe of righteousness, which, by its odour, procures his favor; in short, we are thus blessed when we are put in his place.

But Isaac seems here to desire and implore nothing for his son but what is earthly; for this is the substance of his words, that it might be well with his son in the world, that he might gather together the abundant produce of the earth, that he might enjoy great peace, and shine in honor above others. There is no mention of the heavenly kingdom; and hence it has arisen, that men without learning, and but little exercised in true piety, have imagined that these holy fathers were blessed by the Lord only in respect to this frail and transitory life.

But it appears from many passages to have been far otherwise: and as to the fact that Isaac here confines himself to the earthly favors of God, the explanation is easy; for the Lord did not formerly set the hope of the future inheritance plainly before the eyes of the fathers, (as he now calls and raises us directly towards heaven,) but he led them as by a circuitous course. Thus he appointed the land of Canaan as a mirror and pledge to them of the celestial inheritance. In all his acts of kindness he gave them tokens of his paternal favor, not indeed for the purpose of making them content with present good, so that they should neglect heaven, or should follow a merely empty shadow, as some foolishly suppose; but that, being aided by such helps, according to the time in which they lived, they might by degrees rise towards heaven; for since Christ, the first-fruits of those who rise again, and the author of the eternal and incorruptible life, had not yet been manifested, his spiritual kingdom was, in this way, shadowed forth under figures only, until the fullness of the time should come; and as all the promises of God were involved, and in a sense clothed in these symbols, so the faith of the holy fathers observed the same measure, and made its advances heavenwards by means of these earthly rudiments.

Therefore, although Isaac makes the temporal favors of God prominent, nothing is further from his mind than to confine the hope of his son to this world; he would raise him to the same elevation to which he himself aspired. Some proof of this may be drawn from his own words; for this is the principal point, that he assigns him the dominion over the nations. But whence the hope of such a dignity, unless he had been persuaded that his race had been elected by the Lord, and, indeed, with this stipulation, that the right of the kingdom should remain with one son only?

Meanwhile, let it suffice to adhere to this principle, that the holy man, when he implores a prosperous course of life for his son, wishes that God, in whose paternal favor stands our solid and eternal happiness, may be propitious to him.

29. Cursed be every one that curseth thee. What I have before said must be remembered, namely, that these are not bare wishes, such as fathers are wont to utter on behalf of their children, but that promises of God are included in them; for Isaac is the authorized interpreter of God, and the instrument employed by the Holy Spirit; and therefore, as in the person of God, he efficaciously pronounces those accursed who shall oppose the welfare of his son. This then is the confirmation of the promise, by which God, when he receives the faithful under his protection, declares that he will be an enemy to their enemies. The whole force of the benediction turns to this point, that God will prove himself to be a kind father to his servant Jacob in all things, so that he will constitute him the chief and the head of a holy and elect people, will

preserve and defend him by his power, and will secure his salvation in the face of enemies of every kind.

30. Jacob was yet scarce gone out. Here is added the manner in which Esau was repulsed, which circumstance availed not a little to confirm the benediction to Jacob: for if Esau had not been rejected, it might seem that he was not deprived of that honor which nature had given him: but now Isaac declares, that what he had done, in virtue of his patriarchal office, could not but be ratified. Here, truly, it again appears, that the primogeniture which Jacob obtained, at the expense of his brother, was made his by a free gift; for if we compare the works of both together, Esau obeys his father, brings him the produce of his hunting, prepares for his father the food obtained by his own labor, and speaks nothing but the truth: in short, we find nothing in him which is not worthy of praise. Jacob never leaves his home, substitutes a kid for venison, insinuates himself by many lies, brings nothing which would properly commend him, but in many things deserves reprehension. Hence it must be acknowledged, that the cause of this event is not to be traced to works, but that it lies hid in the eternal counsel of God. Yet Esau is not unjustly reprobated, because they who are not governed by the Spirit of God can receive nothing with a right mind; only let it be firmly maintained, that since the condition of all is equal, if any one is preferred to another, it is not because of his own merit, but because the Lord has gratuitously elected him.

33. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly 48 Here now again the faith which had been smothered in the breast of the holy man shines forth and emits fresh sparks; for there is no doubt that his fear springs from faith. Besides, it is no common fear which Moses describes, but that which utterly confounds the holy man: for, whereas he was perfectly conscious of his own vocation, and therefore was persuaded that the duty of naming the heir with whom he should deposit the covenant of eternal life was divinely enjoined upon him, he no sooner discovered his error than he was filled with fear, that in an affair so great and so serious God had suffered him to err; for unless he had thought that God was the director of this act, what should have hindered him from alleging his ignorance as an excuse, and from becoming enraged against Jacob, who had stolen in upon him by fraud and by unjustifiable arts? But although covered with shame on account of the error he had committed, he nevertheless, with a collected mind, ratifies the benediction which he had pronounced; and I do not doubt that he then, as one awaking, began to recall to memory the oracle to which he had not been sufficiently attentive. Wherefore, the holy man was not impelled by ambition to be thus tenacious of his purpose, as obstinate men are wont to be, who prosecute to the last what they have once, though foolishly, begun; but the declaration, I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed, was the effect of a rare and precious faith; for he, renouncing the affections of the flesh, now yields himself entirely to God, and, acknowledging God as the Author of the benediction which he had uttered, ascribes due glory to him in not daring to retract it. The benefit of this doctrine pertains to the whole Church, in order that we may certainly know, that whatever the heralds of the gospel promise to us by the command of God, will be efficacious and stable, because they do not speak as private men, but as by the command of God himself; and the infirmity of the minister does not destroy the faithfulness, power, and efficacy of God's word. He who presents himself to us charged with the offer of eternal happiness and life, is subject to our common miseries and to death; yet, notwithstanding, the promise is efficacious. He who absolves us from sins is himself a sinner; but because his office is divinely assigned him, the stability of this grace, having its foundation in God, shall never fail.

34. He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry. Though Esau persists in imploring the blessing, he yet gives a sign of desperation, which is the reason why he obtains no benefit, because he enters not by the gate of faith. True piety, indeed, draws forth tears and great cries from the children of God; but Esau, trembling and full of fears, breaks out in wailings; afterwards he casts, at a venture, his wish into the air,

that he also may receive a blessing. But his blind incredulity is reproved by his own words; for whereas one blessing only had been deposited with his father, he asks that another should be given to him, as if it were in his father's power indiscriminately to breathe out blessings, independently of the command of God. Here the admonition of the Apostle may suggest itself to our minds,

"that Esau, when he sought again the forfeited blessing with tears and loud lamentations, found no place for repentance,"

(Heb 12:17;)

for they who neglect to follow God when he calls on them, afterwards call upon him in vain, when he has turned his back. So long as God addresses and invites us, the gate of the kingdom of heaven is in a certain sense open: this opportunity we must use, if we desire to enter, according to the instruction of the Prophet,

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found;

call ye upon him while he is near." (Isa 55:6.)

Of which passage Paul is the interpreter, in defining that to be the acceptable time of the day of salvation in which grace is brought unto us by the gospel. (2Co 6:2.) They who suffer that time to pass by, may, at length, knock too late, and without profit, because God avenges himself of their idleness. We must therefore fear lest if, with deafened ears, we suffer the voice of God now to pass unheeded by, he should, in turn, become deaf to our cry. But it may be asked, how is this repulse consistent with the promise,

"If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live?" (Eze 18:21.)

Moreover, it may seem at variance with the clemency of God to reject the sighings of those who, being crushed by misery, fly for refuge to his mercy. I answer, that repentance, if it be true and sincere, will never be too late; and the sinner who, from his soul, is displeased with himself, will obtain pardon: but God in this manner punishes the contempt of his grace, because they who obstinately reject it, do not seriously purpose in their mind to return to him. Thus it is that they who are given up to a reprobate mind are never touched with genuine penitence. Hypocrites truly break out into tears, like Esau, but their heart within them will remain closed as with iron bars. Therefore, since Esau rushes forward, destitute of faith and repentance, to ask a blessing, there is no wonder that he should be rejected.

36. Is he not rightly named Jacob? That the mind of Esau was affected with no sense of penitence appears hence; he accused his brother and took no blame to himself. But the very beginning of repentance is grief felt on account of sin, together with self-condemnation. Esau ought to have descended into himself, and to have become his own judge. Having sold his birthright, he had darted, like a famished dog, upon the meat and the pottage; and now, as if he had done no wrong, he vents all his anger on his brother. Further, if the blessing is deemed of any value, why does he not consider that he had been repelled from it, not simply by the fraud of man, but by the providence of God? We see, therefore, that like a blind man feeling in the dark, he cannot find his way.

37. Behold, I have made him thy Lord. Isaac now more openly confirms what I have before said, that since God was the author of the blessing, it could neither be vain nor evanescent. For he does not here

magnificently boast of his dignity, but keeps himself within the bounds and measure of a servant, and denies that he is at liberty to alter anything. For he always considers, (which is the truth,) that when he sustains the character of God's representative, it is not lawful for him to proceed further than the command will bear him. Hence, indeed, Esau ought to have learned from whence he had fallen by his own fault, in order that he might have humbled himself, and might rather have joined himself with his brother, in order to become a partaker of his blessing, as his inferior, than have desired anything separately for himself. But a depraved cupidity carries him away, so that he, forgetful of the kingdom of God, pursues and cares for nothing except his own private advantage. Again, we must notice Isaac's manner of speaking, by which he claims a certain force and efficacy for his benediction, as if his word carried with it dominion, abundance of corn and wine, and whatever else God had promised to Abraham. For God, in requiring the faithful to depend on himself alone, would nevertheless have them to rest securely upon the word, which, at his command, is declared to them by the tongue of men. In this way they are said to remit sins, who are only the messengers and interpreters of free forgiveness.

38. Hast thou but one blessing? Esau seems to take courage; but he neglects the care of his soul, and turns, like a swine, to the pampering of his flesh. He had heard that his father had nothing left to grant; because, truly, the full and entire grace of God so rested upon Jacob, that out of his family there was no happiness. Wherefore, if Esau sought his own welfare, he ought to have drawn from that fountain, and rather to have subjected himself to his brother, than to have cut himself off from a happy connection with him. He chose, however, rather to be deprived of spiritual grace, provided he might but possess something of his own, and apart from his brother, than to be his inferior at home. He could not be ignorant, that there was one sole benediction by which his brother Jacob had been constituted the heir of the divine covenant: for Isaac would be daily discoursing with them concerning the singular privilege which God had vouchsafed to Abraham and his seed. Esau would not previously have complained so bitterly, unless he had felt that he had been deprived of an incomparable benefit. Therefore, by departing from this one source of blessing, he indirectly renounces God, and cuts himself off from the body of the Church, caring for nothing but this transitory life. But it would have been better for him, miserably to perish through the want of all things in this world, and with difficulty to draw his languishing breath, than to slumber amidst temporal delights. What afterwards follows, -- namely, that he wept with loud lamentations, -- is a sign of fierce and proud indignation, rather than of penitence; for he remitted nothing of his ferocity, but raged like a cruel beast of prey. So the wicked, when punishment overtakes them, bewail the salvation they have lost; but, meanwhile, do not cease to delight themselves in their vices; and instead of heartily seeking after the righteousness of God, they rather desire that his deity should be extinct. Of a similar character is that gnashing of teeth and weeping in hell which, instead of stimulating the reprobate to seek after God, only consumes them with unknown torments

39. Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth. At length Esau obtains what he had asked. For, perceiving himself to be cast down from the rank and honor of primogeniture, he chooses rather to have prosperity in the world, separated from the holy people, than to submit to the yoke of his younger brother. But it may be thought that Isaac contradicts himself, in offering a new benediction, when he had before declared, that he had given to his son Jacob all that was placed at his disposal. I answer, that what has been before said concerning Ishmael must be noted in this place. For God, though he hearkened to Abraham's prayer for Ishmael, so far as concerned the present life, yet immediately restricts his promise, by adding the exception implied in the declaration, that in Isaac only should the seed be called. I do not, however, doubt, that the holy man, when he perceived that his younger son Jacob was the divinely ordained heir of a happy life, would endeavor to retain his firstborn, Esau, in the bond of fraternal

connection, in order that he might not depart from the holy and elect flock of the Church. But now, when he sees him obstinately tending in another direction, he declares what will be his future condition. Meanwhile the spiritual blessing remains in its integrity with Jacob alone, to whom Esau refusing to attach himself, voluntarily becomes an exile from the kingdom of God. The prophecy uttered by Malachi, (Mal 1:3,) may seem to be contradictory to this statement. For, comparing the two brothers, Esau and Jacob, with each other, he teaches that Esau was hated, inasmuch as a possession was given to him in the deserts; and yet Isaac promises him a fertile land. There is a twofold solution: either that the Prophet, speaking comparatively, may with truth call Idumea a desert in comparison with the land of Canaan, which was far more fruitful; or else that he was referring to his own times. For although the devastations of both lands had been terrible, yet the land of Canaan in a short time flourished again, while the territory of Edom was condemned to perpetual sterility, and given up to dragons. Therefore, although God, with respect to his own people, banished Esau to desert mountains, he yet gave to him a land sufficiently fertile in itself to render the promise by no means nugatory. For that mountainous region both had its own natural fruitfulness, and was so watered by the dew of heaven, that it would yield sustenance to its inhabitants.

40. By thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother. It is to be observed that events are here predicted which were never fulfilled in the person of Esau; and therefore, that the prophecy is concerning things at that time far distant. For Jacob was so far from having obtained dominion over his brother, that on his return from Padan-aram, he suppliantly tendered him his obedience; and the breaking off of the yoke which Isaac here mentions, is referred to a very remote period. He is therefore relating the future condition of Esau's posterity. And he says first, that they shall live by their sword: which words admit a twofold sense, either that, being surrounded by enemies, they shall pass a warlike and unquiet life; or that they shall be free, and their own masters. For there is no power to use the sword where there is no liberty. The former meaning seems the more suitable; namely, that God would limit his promise, lest Esau should be too much exalted: for nothing is more desirable than peace. The holy people also are warned that there will always be some enemies to infest them. This, however, is a very different thing from living by his own sword; which is as if he had said, that the sons of Esau, like robbers, should maintain their security by arms and violence, rather than by legitimate authority. A second limitation of the promise is, that though armed with the sword, he should still not escape subjection to his brother. For the Idumeans were, at length, made tributary to the chosen people; 49 but the servitude was not long continued; because when the kingdoms were divided, the power by which they had held all their neighbors in subjection and fear, was cut off; yet the Lord would have the Idumeans brought into subjection for a short time, that he might furnish a visible demonstration of this prophecy. As to the rest of the time, the restless and unbridled liberty of Esau was more wretched than any state of subjection.

41. And Esau hated Jacob. It hence appears more clearly, that the tears of Esau were so far from being the effect of true repentance, that they were rather evidences of furious anger. For he is not content with secretly cherishing enmity against his brother, but openly breaks out in wicked threats. And it is evident how deeply malice had struck its roots, when he could indulge himself in the desperate purpose of murdering his brother. Even a profane and sacrilegious contumacy betrays itself in him, seeing that he prepares himself to abolish the decree of God by the sword. I will take care, he says, that Jacob shall not enjoy the inheritance promised to him. What is this but to annihilate the force of the benediction, of which he knew that his father was the herald and the minister? Moreover, a lively picture of a hypocrite is here set before us. He pretends that the death of his father would be to him a mournful event: and doubtless it is a religious duty to mourn over a deceased father. But it was a mere pretense on his part, to speak of the day of mourning, when in his haste to execute the impious murder of his brother, the death of his father

seemed to come too slowly, and he rejoiced at the prospect of its approach. 50 With what face could he ever pretend to any human affection, when he gasps for his brother's death, and at the same time attempts to subvert all the laws of nature? It is even possible, that an impulse of nature itself, extorted from him the avowal, by which he would the more grievously condemn himself; as God often censures the wicked out of their own mouth, and renders them more inexcusable. But if a sense of shame alone restrains a cruel mind, this is not to be deemed worthy of great praise; nay, it even betrays a stupid and brutal contempt of God. Sometimes, indeed, the fear of man influences even the pious, as we have seen, in the preceding chapter, Ge 26:1, respecting Jacob: but they soon rise above it, so that with them the fear of God predominates; while forgetfulness of God so pervades the hearts of the wicked, that they rest their hopes in men alone. Therefore, he who abstains from wickedness merely through the fear of man, and from a sense of shame, has hitherto made but little progress. Yet the confession of the Papists is chiefly honored by them with this praise, that it deters many from sin, through the fear lest they should be compelled to proclaim their own disgrace. But the rule of piety is altogether different, since it teaches our conscience to set God before us as our witness and our judge.

42. And these words of Esau... were told to Rebekah. Moses now makes a transition to a new subject of history, showing how Jacob, as a wanderer from his father's house, went into Mesopotamia. Without doubt, it was an exceedingly troublesome and severe temptation to the holy matron, to see that, by her own deed, her son was placed in imminent danger of death. But by faith she wrestled to retain the possession of the grace once received. For, if she had been impelled by a merely womanly attachment to her younger son, it certainly would have been her best and shortest method, to cause the birthright to be restored to Esau: for thus the cause of emulation would have been removed; and he who was burning with grief at the loss of his right, would have had his fury appeased. It is therefore an evidence of extraordinary faith, that Rebekah does not come to any agreement, but persuades her son to become a voluntary exile, and chooses rather to be deprived of his presence, than that he should give up the blessing he had once received. The benediction of the father might now seem illusory; so as to make it appear wonderful that so much should be made of it by Rebekah and Jacob: nevertheless, they were so far from repenting of what they had done, that they do not refuse the bitter punishment of exile, if only Jacob may carry with him the benediction uttered by his father. Moreover, we are taught by this example, that we must bear it patiently, if the cross attends the hope of a better life, as its companion; or even if the Lord adopts us into his family, with this condition, that we should wander as pilgrims without any certain dwelling-place in the world. For, on this account, Jacob is thrust out from his paternal home, where he might quietly have passed his life, and is compelled to migrate to a strange land; because the blessing of God is promised unto him. And as he did not attempt to purchase temporal peace with his brother by the loss of the grace received; so must we beware lest any carnal advantage or any allurements of the world should draw us aside from the course of our vocation: let us rather bear with magnanimity losses of all kinds, so that the anchor of our hope may remain fixed in heaven. When Rebekah says that Esau consoled himself with the thought, that he would slay his brother; the meaning is, that he could not be pacified by any other means, than by this wicked murder

44. And tarry with him a few days. This circumstance mitigates the severity of banishment. For the shortness of the time of suffering avails not a little to support us in adversity. And it was probable that the enmity of Esau would not prove so obstinate as to be unassuaged by his brother's absence. In the Hebrew expression which is translated "a few days," the word few is literally "one" put in the plural number. 51 Rebekah means, that as soon as Jacob should have gone away of his own accord, the memory of the offense would be obliterated from the mind of Esau; as if she had said, Only depart hence for a little while,

and we shall soon assuage his anger.

45. Why should I be deprived of you both in one day? Why does Rebekah fear a double privation? for there was no danger that Jacob, endued with a disposition so mild and placid, should rise up against his brother. We see, therefore, that Rebekah concluded that God would be the avenger of the iniquitous murder. Moreover, although God, for a time, might seem to overlook the deed, and to suspend his judgment, it would yet be necessary for him to withdraw from the parricide. Therefore, by this law of nature, Rebekah declares that she should be entirely bereaved; because she would be compelled to dread and to detest him who survived. But if Rebekah anticipated in her mind what the judgment of God would be, and devoted the murderer to destruction, because she was persuaded that wickedness so great would not be unpunished; much less ought we to close our eyes against the manifest chastisements of God. 52

46. And Rebekah said to Isaac. When Jacob might have fled secretly, his mother, nevertheless, obtains leave for his departure from his father; for so a well-ordered domestic government and discipline required. In giving another cause than the true one to her husband, she may be excused from the charge of falsehood; inasmuch as she neither said the whole truth nor left the whole unsaid. No doubt, she truly affirms that she was tormented, even to weariness of life, on account of her Hittite daughters-in-law: but she prudently conceals the more inward evil, lest she should inflict a mortal wound on her husband: and also, lest she should the more influence the rage of Esau; for the wicked, often, when their crime is detected, are the more carried away with desperation. Now, although in consequence of the evil manners of her daughters-in-law, affinity with the whole race became hateful to Rebekah, yet in this again the wonderful providence of God is conspicuous, that Jacob neither blended, nor entangled himself, with the future enemies of the Church.

Footnotes

42

This is a dangerous position, however it may be modified or explained. True faith never leads to sin. It was the mixture, not to say the predominance of unbelief, which caused Rebekah, instead of waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises in his own way, to plot and to execute a scheme of imposture, which involved herself and her family in perpetual disquietude. What Calvin calls zeal, he ought to have called rashness and something worse. -- Ed.

43

There is a great want of Calvin's accustomed caution and soundness in all this reasoning. It certainly was right that Jacob should feel and express the fear, lest the deception which his mother required him to practice should be detected, and should bring a curse upon him and not a blessing. It would indeed have been a still higher proof of integrity, and a still stronger exercise of faith, had he repelled the importunities of his mother, saying, "How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" -- Ed.

44

Quid enim fuit causae cur nuda et in speciem inania patris vota... praeferret? Tymme translates vota "wishes," and either for the sake of making sense of the passage, or because the edition from which he made his version had a different reading, he puts the word "mother" in the place of "father." But as the

Amsterdam and Berlin editions both have the word patris and not matris, the translation above given seems to be required. It agrees substantially with the French version, which is as follows: Car qui a este cause qu'il a prefere la benediction de son pere, laquelle sembloit nue et vaine en apparence, au repos duquel il jouissoit lors, &c. -- Ed.

45

It is much more probable that Jacob was influenced by a precipitate and ambitious desire to snatch the blessing from the hand of his brother; and though he paused for a moment at the apprehension of consequences, should his mother's scheme fail, yet he too readily acquiesced, and exposed himself to subsequent dangers, not from a supreme regard to the will of God, but from that self-love which so often overshoots its mark. -- Ed.

46

"In his speech of Jacob's there are three direct falsehoods. 1st, 'I am Esau;' 2d, 'I have done according as thou badest me;' 3d, 'Eat of my venison.' We ought not to be extremely solicitous to find excuses for all the actions for holy men." -- Cornelius a Lapide in Poli Syn.

47

Vota sua in comicam personam effundit. Espande ses voeus et benedictions sur une personne disguisee et masquee. Should bestow his vows and benedictions upon a person masked and disguised. -- Fr. Tr.

48

The original is very forcible, and cannot be fully expressed in a translation. "Isaac trembled with a great trembling exceedingly." The Septuagint represents him as in an ecstasy of astonishment. -- Ed.

49

That is, under King David. -- Ed.

50

The Greek translath, 'Let the days of my father's mourning be nigh, that I may kill Jacob my brother;' so making it a wish for his father's speedy death; and the Hebrew also will bear that translation." -- Ainsworth.

51

Hebraice ad verbum habetur, Unis diebus ■■■■■■ ■■■■■■ (yamim achedim). There is no mode of giving a literal rendering of the expression in the English language. -- Ed

52

The French is more diffuse: "Tant plus nous faut -- il appercevoir les fleaux de Dieu qui sont manifestes, et ne faut point ciller les yeux en ne faisant semblant de les voir." So much the more ought we to perceive the scourges of God, which are manifest; and we ought not to wink as pretending not to see them. -- Fr. Tr.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-calvin/genesis-271-46/>

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