

THE TENTH SERMON

OF JACOB AND ESAU,

<012626> GENESIS 26

- 26** Now Abimilech coming unto him to Gerar, with Achuzath his friend, and Picol the Captain of his host:
- 27** Isaack saith unto them, why came you unto me: seeing you hated me, and have sent me away from you?
- 28** Who said unto him we saw for asuretie, that Jehovah was with thee, therefore we said: Let there be an oath between us, that is, between us and thee, Let us therefore strike a covenant with thee.
- 29** Ask vengeance upon thy self, if thou shalt hurt us, like as we have not touched thee, and like as we have done thee good, and have sent thee away with peace: Do thou consent now, thou blessed of the Lord.
- 30** When therefore he had made them a feast, they did eat and drink. And rising in the morning, they swore either to other: And Isaack led them forth, and they went from him with peace.
- 31** And it came to pass that the self same day, Isaacks servants coming unto him, shewed him concerning that well which they had digged, and said unto him we have found waters.
- 32** And he called the same Sohibbah, therefore the name of the City is Beer-schebah even until this day.

<012701> GENESIS 27

- 1** Now when Esau was forty years old, he married a wife named Judith the daughter of Beer the Chithite, and Basmatha the daughter of Elon the Chithite.
- 2** Who were a greese of mind to Isaack and Rebecca.

HOWSOEVER MEN LIVING in this world are subject to many miseries and afflictions, yet nevertheless the most part of the evils that they endure,

proceed from themselves, everyone of them being as a Wolf to his companion. We are compassed about with savage beasts, who are altogether our enemies: there is neither Heaven nor earth, nor other elements, that do not bring with them a thousand hurts. We know not how to go upon the water, but we must be, within half a foot of our death: There needs but one torment to swallow up a people: The earth also hath many annoyances, as if God had threatened us on every side. But when we shall make comparison, there are no wild beasts, nor heaven, nor earth, nor anything whatsoever, which so much annoyeth men, as each one annoyeth his neighbor. Now for this cause we ought to think it a singular benefit of God bestowed upon us, when he giveth us peace and that we are not oppressed and wronged on every side, when no mischief is devised against us, no hurt nor damage done unto us: It must needs be that the protection of God have a hand in it, seeing that every man will always be as a Wolf unto his neighbors, as we have said. And this is the mark whereunto this present story tendeth: For Moyses would show that after God had appeared to Isaack, he yet farther declareth his favor unto him, in that the King of Gerar came unto him, and sought his amity and friendship, and hereby was Isaack honored, and specially it was unto him a great advantage, because he might always have been in doubt, inasmuch as he had been greatly envied in the country, and had been constrained to depart from thence, notwithstanding he had lived amongst them, in all humanity and courtesy. He might therefore have been always in great suspense, fearing the rage of his neighbors. But God made them to come unto him of their own accord, and not only to show themselves friends: but they flatter him, and fear that he will hurt them, and therefore they demand a covenant to be made between them with a solemn oath. Now we have to note here first of all, that God hath the hearts of men in his own hand to mollify their hardness, when it pleaseth him, and to abate all their rage, and to turn them to courtesy and kindness: for certainly the king of Gear had not changed his nature, when he came to Isaack: and on the other side if he feared Isaack, he might have conspired with his subjects and neighbors, and so have set upon him altogether. On the other side, he had given no occasion to doubt of him, inasmuch as Isaack had not given him any argument of distrusting him: he rather had behaved himself in such sort, that he plainly declared that he desired not to grieve any, no not so much as his presence: For we have seen how he departed from their company.

It must needs be therefore that God stirred up these profane people, to cause them to come unto Isaack, and to submit themselves, as they do with such humility, that they entreat a poor man, a stranger, who had no great credit amongst them, nor had any but his own family, which he kept apart, without giving any token of attempting any such matter. Before God had laid the bridle in their neck, but this was to prove the patience of his servant. For when he was denied water, and that in the end it was said unto him, that he was stronger than they, and that he could be no longer suffered, there is no doubt but that God then exercised him to the end he might try what patience there was in him. And so Isaack knew, that if it had pleased God to give him peaceable dwelling in that Country where he was, that he should not have been driven thence: but inasmuch as he saw men perk up against him, he knew that it was as a passport from God for him to depart.

Now on the contrary we must also note, that god moved them upon the suddaine [*sudden*] to come towards Isaack, and to appease and abolish all enmities and quarrels, which might yet be moved either on the one side or on the other. Let us mark well then, when any outrage is done against us, and there, where, we shall have endeavored to do pleasure and service to everyone, that we shall be wonderfully pricked and tormented, that this should be done by God's appointment, who willeth us to strive, not in doing evil, or requiting evil for evil, but by possessing our souls in patience, as also our Lord Jesus Christ hath thereto exhorted us. And likewise on the contrary, when we shall see men to be favorable unto us, and to intend no evil quarrel, or riot against us, let us know that God hath pity upon us, and that he governeth his creatures, and directeth them to such purpose as he seeth good. And likewise let us beseech God, as often as our enemies shall use any cruelty against us, and that we cannot win them by any means, nor by any moderation that we can use, that it will please him to put to his hand, knowing that he can turn when it shall please him, those that are Wolves into Sheep. This is, that we have to learn first of all by this History. But it is said that Isaack at their first coming spake bluntly enough on this wise:

Why are you come unto me? Seeing you hated me, and draw me out from amongst you?

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

And this is it that Solomon saith:

That hatred discovereth reproaches, faults and injuries.

(<201802> Proverbs 18:2, 3)

When the hearts then are thus set on fire, it is not possible but that the tongues also must overflow to outrage one against the other. But Isaack took no such course: but we have to note, that whensoever we shall be patient that this letteth [*hindereth*] not, but that we use our liberty, to show them that have faulted, the wrong that they have done unto us, and so make them to understand their offense: to the end all may profit them.

It is true that in this case we must thoroughly examine our affection: for it is a very hard and rare thing, that a man who shall have been provoked and offended, that he should not be moved with some passion, and so always pursue his own particular cause. And therefore I have said that we must enter into ourselves, and diligently mark, if we be not moved with some desire of revenge, or tainted with some hatred or rancor: when we shall have thoroughly known this, and find ourselves clear, then we may have an open mouth to show them their offense, that shall have wronged us, not to be revenged in condemning of them: but to the end that they flatter not themselves in their sins, as this is a very common evil against men. Lo then a point which we have diligently to mark: that is, that the patience of the faithful is not without all touch of any passion, neither is it against this, that we frankly show them: ye have done me wrong, and ye have offended GOD, and ye have had no occasion to do so: and yet: that they always have special regard unto the salvation of those, who have persecuted them, and have been their enemies. For this that Isaack nippeth them withal, was undoubtedly as an admonition, whereby he sought the good and salvation of them, to whom he spake so bluntly: For if had dissembled it, what profit might come to him thereby? The others would have thought it deep

hypocrisy, if he had made show to have been contented and well pleased with them, and that he had nothing but honey in his mouth, and have said: Lo it is even so: Abimelech knowing himself to be faulty would have thought, See, a double man and a liar. Lo what they gain that dissemble so much, and set such a fair countenance upon it. So then, although the Children of God be patient, and that they be always ready to forgive all wrongs committed against them, and have not any manner of ways cankered hearts against their enemies, yet they cease not oftentimes to say, See wherein you have done me wrong: and this is to show that they walk in all roundness and simplicity. And this end ought always to be kept: that is to say, when we shall be grieved, or any wrong or extortion shall be done unto us, that yet we procure always the good of our enemies, and that the reproofs and accusations that we make unto them, be so many advertisements or warnings to draw them to the right way, and to touch them: to the intent they be not hardened and made obstinate, and that they may be better advised in time to come, and that they fight not against God, thinking they have to do with men: as it is very likely that Isaack did here, who would likewise provide for the time to come. For this shall be very lawful for us, when we shall have suffered any wrong, to do as much as lieth in us, to rid ourselves from it. For although our Lord Jesus Christ commandeth us to be ready, when we shall have received one blow upon the one cheek to turn the other: Yet it meaneth not that we should go and provoke our enemies, and give them occasion to use us. We ought to avoid this as much as is possible for us: and by all good and loving means we ought to stop their malice who have no fear of God in them. Isaack then had respect to himself in this case: But it was not to the end to be avenged, nor to render like for like: He only contented himself to have set a bar against all those which had entreated him evil and dealt unjustly with him before time: to the end they might be stayed, and might surcease from such wrongs.

This briefly is that we have to learn out of this place. And this rule is very necessary: For oftentimes when men are reconciled one to the other, they must be silent and then there shall need none other means: and he yet who shall have sustained the greatest wrong, he shall have more liberty and more boldness to justify himself, against them that would make us believe that the Lamb hath troubled the water. Let us mark well therefore, that when any shall have done wrong to his neighbor, if he come not to pursue

his particular quarrels so stoutly, that he rest thereupon, that it shall be good that each one be advertised, and that he which hath done the wrong, notwithstanding know it, confess it, and be humbled in it: but we see that this greatly profited not: so far off was it that Isaack pursued not the matter to the uttermost, although he saw that his admonition was not received, and that it touched not their hearts, to whom he had spoken: howsoever it was, he dealt not spitefully against them. Notwithstanding mark Abimelech who saith:

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

Abimelech not only hideth the evil which he hath committed, and would excuse it: but he boasteth that he hath done his duty wonderful well towards Isaack: and this is the common manner, as we have said: For there is nothing more hard for a man than to condemn himself: although he feel himself faulty. Men will be drawn sooner to anything than to this lowliness, which yet notwithstanding is a token necessarily required to true repentance. For if a man feel that he have faulted, and have true repentance, he must needs confess himself guilty before God, and likewise towards his neighbor, when it shall be requisite. And therefore our Savior Christ also exhorteth us, that if we have any quarrel against our neighbors, that is to say, if we have offended them, that rather we should leave our sacrifices at the altar, to the end to seek agreement, than to flatter ourselves, and to harden our hearts, despising those to whom we are bound. Now he speaketh of that time of the sacrifices: but that was as much as if he should have said, that we cannot pray unto God, nor do anything that shall be acceptable unto him, as long as we disdain to repair the faults which we have committed. Now although God command us never so straightly to humble ourselves, when we have offended, yet can none attain unto this way: and that is here sufficiently taught us in the person of Abimelech and of his companions. For men are so blinded both with selflove, pride and arrogance, that they cannot in any case be brought to this, to say: I have offended: for they are always ashamed to confess their fault: and yet notwithstanding are not ashamed to be condemned before God and his Angels: and yet when they have remorse in themselves, they must condemn themselves in spite of their teeth. They can trimly trace out all the ways that can be to maintain their corruption, they have their goodly starting holes, to uphold themselves in their mischievous

cause: but when they shall have won both great and small, whether it be through corruption or favor, or by any other means, and all the world stand for them, yet must they in the end come to the judgment of their own conscience which they cannot abide: and as I have said, there they shall find themselves to have gotten nothing by all their fetches and starting holes: For maugre [*in spite of*] their beards will they [*willingly*], nil they [*unwillingly*], they must feel themselves guilty before God. Now when this is set before us, it is not to the end that we should sleep in any such vice: but to the intent, that we knowing ourselves to be subject unto it, should the rather seek for remedy. When Moyses saith therefore that Abimelech made as if he had well acquitted himself towards Isaack (and we know the contrary by that which hath been rehearsed) it was not only to show that Abimelech was an hypocrite and a double man: but it was also to set a looking glass before our eyes, to the end we might know that there is not anyone amongst us, which is not inclined to flatter himself, and who is not bent to bolster out an ill cause: although he were sufficiently convinced to have offended, that yet nevertheless pride would not suffer us to submit ourselves. Lo then Moyses purpose and drift. So then, what have we to do? that everyone gage and sound himself to the bottom to find what is in him: and after we have duly examined ourselves, we shall find that there is not anyone of us that would not hide his faults, and that would not wrong his adversary, when we have any quarrel: and hereupon it is that we seek out goodly colors to excuse ourselves, and starting holes and delays: and turn (as they say) black to white, and white into black, that we might justify ourselves. Seeing therefore that we are subject to such an evil, let us fight against it. For it is not enough for us to feel our vice, but we must forsake it, and in forsaking it, we must yet resist it, albeit we cannot altogether get the upper hand of it. And when we shall come to put this in practice, and shall have offended this man here, and that man there, let us not look upon men to blear our eyes: but let every man withdraw himself into his own secret, and say, Go to, what can I do now? It is true that I might justly do wrong unto mine adversary: for he hath offended me thus and thus: but notwithstanding am I innocent before God and his Angels? It is meet that I begin to judge myself. For although that I be a poor blind wretch, yet for all that I feel in myself that I have offended, and I cannot lie unto myself: and in the meanwhile will God be deceived? When I have cunningly dissembled, will not he find out the least drop for all that.

So then there is no other means to be absolved and released before God, but this, that I condemn myself. Mark then, I say, how we ought to practice this doctrine, and to apply it to our use and commodity. And to be short, how often soever we offend, let us note that repentance containeth in it confession, not to go and whisper in the ear of a Priest, as was done in the Papacy: but a confession to give glory to God, and likewise to make amends for the fault which was committed against our neighbors. And therefore, they who committed any wrong or outrage against another, it behooved them to labor the amendment thereof, in humbling themselves, and howsoever it was not to be ashamed to say, I have offended you: I pray you forgive me. For mark also how we shall obtain favor and forgiveness before God, and by what means those wrongs we have done to our neighbors shall not cry out for vengeance against us: For undoubtedly, although they to whom we have done the wrong, content themselves, and think no more of it, yet the evil shall be enrolled before God, and cry more loud before his majesty, than if all men were armed and set themselves against us. So then, to the end our faults may be blotted out and defaced before God, and that there be no cry that may hasten the Lord to judgment against us, by reason of the offenses that we have committed, let us learn in such sort to appease all strife's and quarrels that everyone may prevent it by humbling himself with an upright and pure confession. This is that we have to mark upon this point. Now on the other side, we see as I have already touched, that Isaack had not as a man would say, an heart puffed up, neither that nourished any manner of rancor against such as had been his enemies: for he pursued them not, he had indeed special cause against Abimelech and his company: For as Saint Paul saith, they which are not of the flock and body of the church, we cannot judge them, to the end to bring them to repentance, as we may those which make profession of Christianity, who ought out of hand (as much as lieth in them) to receive admonition of their faults. For this is the order which GOD hath set amongst all those that are his, that we should be subject to receive admonition both from great and small.

So that there is, as it were, a mutual jurisdiction without the sword, and without authority, if we do our duty. For everyone having the word of God in his mouth is as a Judge, to show his neighbor the faults which he hath committed. He shall be a judge in one respect and he shall suffer himself to be judged in another. Mark then, how we judge these that are of

the household, as Saint Paul saith, that is to say, such as are of our body, and of the Religion of the faithful, and of the children of God. But those that are without, although we condemn them, yet cannot we call them so familiarly, to say, Thou hast offended. For they have no such acquaintance with us, and there is no such mutual right, as there is amongst the members of the body of the church. And this is the cause why Isaack dealeth not so earnestly with Abimelech and his people, as if they had been knit together in one faith, and worshipped the same God, and had been of one Church, and had had one and the selfsame order established amongst them. It is very likely that Isaack would not have passed this over to have said unto him: What? Come you hither with your brags, making as though you were my good friends, and had used nothing but courtesy towards me? And what courtesy was that to deny me water, yea and to dam up the wells that I had digged by mine own labor and the sweat of those that were mine? And this could bring you no loss or hindrance: and yet through malice you have gone about to put out mine eyes: and in the end you have driven me out and have not suffered me to dwell amongst you. And what friendship was this? Isaack therefore might have stood to have maintained his cause, if Abimelech had been capable to have received such reproof: but it was enough for him freely to have laid open his affection. For seeing Abimelech would not be corrected, neither had any such repentance as was requisite for him: thereupon he leaveth him. So then, when we shall have labored to bring those to repentance that have offended, if we see them obstinate, we can no further press or urge them. It is true that if they be members of the Church, we must follow them, to the end they continue not obstinate, and if they will not endeavor to open themselves, and that we see they will not be displeased with their faults, that yet nevertheless we hold them as vanquished. For mark how it behooveth us to handle them who are so wild and hard hearted. My friend, now thou showest thy impudence: before I well perceived that thou wast strayed out of the right path: but now I see that thou art altogether desperate and without hope: For thou doest manifestly despise God. And what gettest thou either in this or in that? For thine offense is well known. And thus we may very well beat them down, who imagine through toughness and stubbornness to win their cause. But if we have to do with those, which have no acquaintance with us, and are not our brethren, let it suffice us to have showed them the truth in one word: For this shall be dearly enough bought of them, if they think not better upon it to humble themselves. And for

our part when we shall be reprov'd for any offense, let us not wait for any long process and such great inquests to be convinc'd as it were by fine force of many witnesses: but let us receive correction patiently as soon as it shall be offer'd us, and not be like to those that throw up an handful of ashes, to take away the clear light: let us therefore confess our faults: for this is the only remedy, except we will resist god: and let us know that when any warning or admonition shall be given us, that then God would have his grace felt of us, and that he is careful to draw us back, to the end we should not perish, that we should not remain obstinate, and that Satan should not take possession of us. Let us know this, to the end we may come to repentance and true lowliness. Now Isaack showeth yet better, that he keepeth no mind of revengement or enmity, although they had offended him: For he prepareth a banquet, and they eat and drink together. Lo here a point which we have well to meditate upon. For this also showeth, how that we must fight against our passion, all the time of our life: so that this is as it were the ABC of Christians, not to requite evil for evil: but contrariwise to render good for evil, and to get the victory in this matter: the which cannot enter into our fancy. This I say, is as it were our ABC: and there is no such perfection in us, but that we should begin here: That so soon as we desire and have a will to serve God, it behooveth that we be spoiled of all bitterness, hatred, and rancor, of all desire to revenge, not only to forgive our enemies without procuring of their hurt: but also that we be ready to do them good. But now who is he that dischargeth himself herein of the hundredth part? But we shall find, albeit it seemeth that many are (as they say) petty Angels, and have nothing but a fervent desire to serve god, and to honor him, yea and there is nothing in them but love, and they are therein resolute and settled: yet as soon as they be provok'd, the poison so breaketh forth and afterwards dwelleth so long in them, that they keep the remembrance of some small offense, in their hearts all the time of their life. When we see therefore that we cannot be purged at the first day, nor the first year, of this cursed affection of revenge, so much the more we must apply this remedy, to the end we may be order'd and govern'd by the spirit of God: not to remain asleep in enmities and rancors [*bitterness, deep-seated ill will*]: but willingly to forgive them, and to be thoroughly patient in all things. And so, we shall have well profited all the time of our life, when we shall have learned, to what use this history of Isaack is rehears'd unto us: that is, that he prepared a banquet for his enemies, not in a ceremony, or for fashion sake

only, but to show that he was pure and clean from all malice, and that he had forgotten and buried all the offenses, whereat they might pick any quarrels, Now it is said a little after:

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

It is true that Isaack had the hurt, when the other demanded of him, that he would promise and swear unto them not to wrong them nor hurt them: For they had had sufficient proof, that they had not found him a violent man, nor one given to do any harm. Wherefore come they then to disquiet him farther? He might have put all this back: but he doth yield something of his right: as when we would purchase peace amongst men, we must always have this means, not to give it them wholly, who have done us wrong: but for all that, not to too extremely to challenge and hold whatsoever belongeth unto us, without yielding unto them one crumb, (as they say) thereof. For if every man should be so given to his own particular right, men could never be united and knit together: and although they were, they could never cease from day to day to have new occasions to devour and eat up one another. There is therefore but one way to nourish peace and concord: and that is, that no man seek that which is his own: as also Saint Paul maketh mention thereof, speaking unto us of Charity, 1 Corinthians the thirteenth Chapter, where he saith (^{<461305>} 1 Corinthians 13:5) expressly, That Charity hath this property, *Not to seek her own*. And further, when he exhorteth us to live peaceably, and that we should love brotherly fellowship, and that none of us should give himself to ambition, nor have a desire to be more, greater, and higher, and to have the upper hand: For the word which he useth, meaneth, there should be no desire of superiority or having the upper hand. Now, as long as we shall have this desire (as I have said), Lo as it were a fire blowed up and kindled: there are a thousand ways which Satan will find to set us at such discord, at war, dissention, and such contention, that it should seem we would overthrow all. So, let us mark well, to the end that we may dwell in friendship and brotherly concord with our neighbors, it behooveth everyone that he forsake and yield of his own right, and that everyone keep not this extremity, to say, I will keep whatsoever is mine, and will pursue it, and forgo nothing by no manner of means whatsoever. When we shall deal thus, certainly the Devil will always find some cunning, to kindle the fire of discord and strife of words, and in the end of war. This therefore is that which we have to learn concerning this text. But here by the way we see

that it is lawful for the children of God to enter into league and friendship with heathen people, and such as profess nothing but false religion: as long as it is not to join ourselves with them, nor to draw in the same yoke. For we must mark well, that admonition of Paul, who saith:

Take heed that you draw not in the yoke together with unbelievers:

(^{<470614>} 2 Corinthians 6:14)

For he speaketh this by way of comparison, as if two oxen were coupled together, to draw in one yoke, they must one answer the other: and though they be wild and sometimes straggle, yet being tied together by the necks with the yoke, they must follow the same train. Saint Paul would show us, that we must not be coupled with unbelievers, in such sort, that we be holden with their chains, and that we be so entangled with them, that we consent unto evil, neither in any respect to be tied therein: but only for to nourish peace, to stop outrages and violences, it shall always be lawful for us to enter into league with them. Let us take heed therefore that we be separated from all their malice, and therein that we have no acquaintance with them, and especially that we condemn their iniquity as much as lieth in us, so as we be not so much as companions and brethren with the wicked, no not complices [*associates*]: as it is said, specially in the fifteenth Psalm, (^{<191501>} Psalm 15) that we must hate them. But nevertheless, to stop their rage, and to take away all occasion of hurt, and to shut the door against them, to the end they put not in practice their lewd enterprises, we may well meet with their evil by making league with them, to the end they may not flow to all licentiousness of evil, when we shall have put such a bar first before them. Yea we see that God hath showed us this favor and grace, that we should take his name to witness, to the end we might be assured either of other: whereby he showeth, how acceptable a thing Concord amongst men is unto him, and in what detestation he hath all quarrels, wars, wrongs, hurts, outrages, and oppressions, which men shall do each unto other. For this is no small matter, that God giveth his own name so to be used, and as it were, pawneth it. And when a Prince must give some of his children for hostage, he will do it with great difficulty and much ado: but our Lord giveth his own Name for hostage, when there is cause of nourishing peace amongst us, yea and when the matter stands so, that Concord must be had with infidels, to the end they may leave off to rage against us, and not hurt us. Seeing then God hath vouchsafed [*permitted*] to lend his own Name to this

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

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

Here we see on the one side, how God would comfort his servant every way: For it was not only showed him that he should be assured from thenceforth that none should hurt him: seeing the king himself of the country was come to seek to him: but also he had water given him, which he might enjoy peaceably and quietly as his own. When therefore our Lord showeth this great favor towards Isaack, let us know that he tempteth not him above their strength, but always sweeteneth their afflictions in such sort, that they shall not be as it were ever oppressed and quite overthrown: and let us hope, that altogether like as Isaack was upholden, and that God after he had afflicted him, looked also again unto him to give him somewhat wherewith to comfort him, so likewise must we wait, and then we shall not be deceived, if we rest there. For God knoweth our frailty, and there is no doubt but he will always give us such taste of his mercy and favor, that we shall have good cause to bless his name, and have no occasion to grieve ourselves in such sort, that we know not how to comfort ourselves anymore in him. But the principal point is, that Esau took two wives from among the Hethites. Here we begin to see already that Esau was not only once profane, but that he went on in that course, and gave himself wholly thereto, as we have showed heretofore, that after he had well filled his belly with the pottage, that Jacob his brother had

prepared for him, and when he had eaten and drunk, he went his way, and despised his birthright. Moyses also rehearseth now that he took two wives from amongst the Hethites: for if he had had any remorse within him, and that he had esteemed the promise of the spiritual inheritance made unto his father, it is certain, that he would have holden himself as separate from all those people. For he knew full well, how his grandfather Abraham had behaved himself in that point, that he had made his servant to swear solemnly, that he should not take a wife for his son Isaack in the land of Canaan: he knew that his mother was sought after, in a far country, in Mesopotamia, because god would have this house as it were apart, and would not have it mingled and mashed with those of that country. What doth he therefore, when he taketh two wives of the inhabitants of Canaan, whom God had accursed? This was as much as if he had forsaken the promise of salvation, and as though he had renounced, to make anymore reckoning thereof than if it had not been worth a straw. Lo one testimony already how Esau made himself unworthy of his birthright: and this came to pass because he was not governed by the spirit of God, as also we have showed before, that God will so hold in and keep his elect, and in such sort ratify and seal in their hearts his goodness and fatherly adoption, that they shall soar up to him, and despise this world, to the end they may rejoice in those spiritual benefits he hath prepared for them: but contrariwise, he letteth loose the reigns to all those whom he hath rejected, in such sort, that they harden themselves: and although this be not done all at once at the first push, yet notwithstanding a man shall find in the end, that there is no seed of the fear of God, nor of godliness in them. This therefore is the thing we have to bear away upon this place. And hereupon let us learn in suchwise to behave ourselves, that always we labor to sunder ourselves from them, that would draw us to destruction: For it is without all doubt, that if we live overfamiliarly with the contemners of god, they will soon defile us: their fellowship and conversation is a deadly pestilence. And so much the rather it behooveth us to walk with carefulness herein, taking good heed unto ourselves that we defile not ourselves with the filthiness of this world. And let us in the mean season acknowledge, that it is also a wonderful providence of God, that he would have Esau to take two wives in this country: For this was to this end, that he might be as it were cut off from the house of his father Isaack: he loved him dearly, and although his wives vexed him, yet for all that he could not withdraw his heart from Esau, knowing notwithstanding that God had rejected him. And herein he

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

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