

THE EIGHTH SERMON

OF JACOB AND ESAU,

<012611> GENESIS 26

- 11** And Abimelech commanded all his people saying, He that shall touch this man or his wife, he shall undoubtedly die the death.
- 12** Now Isaack, sowing in that land, he got every year an hundred measures: so did Jehovah bless him.
- 13** So did that man increase, and grow on with a continual increase, even until he was very rich.
- 14** For he had great possession of flocks, and possession of droves, and so great a family, that the Philistians envied him:
- 15** And they dammed up all the Welles, which his fathers servants had digged in the time of his father Abraham filling them up with earth.
- 16** So as Abimilech said unto Isaack, Depart from us, for thou art made more mightier then we.
- 17** Therefore Isaack departed from thence, and pitching his tents in the valley of Gerar, he settled there,
- 18** (For Isaack had digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the time of Abraham his father, and which the Philistines had dammed up after the death of Abraham: and he had given them names, according to the names which his father had given them.)
- 19** And the servants of Isaack digging in the same valley, they found there a well of living waters.
- 20** Now the Shepherds of Gerar, contended with Isaacks shepherds saying: These waters are ours: Wherefore they called the name of that well Heseck, because they had moved trife with them of their own accord.
- 21** Afterwards when they had digged another Well, they contended also for that: Wherefore he called the name of that Sitnah.

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

Now this is rehearsed unto us above all, to the end we might know, how God hath kept his own, though they have dwelt amongst wicked and cruel people, as it were amongst savage beasts: nevertheless he hath maintained them by his power: and this is to the end that we likewise should trust in him. For the goodness of God, which he used towards our old fathers, is not only rehearsed unto us, to the end that we should know that he was then pitiful towards them which trusted in him: but that we should not doubt, that he will suffer us to be molested at this day, so that we have our refuge unto him: and when we know that he will be on our side, that we be also certain that he will maintain our part, and that his protection will be

enough for us, against whatsoever, men shall be able to attempt or devise against us.

When therefore we shall have such an affiance, the example of Isaack which is here rehearsed unto us, ought to serve us for an instruction, as if God should show us his hand stretched out, to help and succor [*aid*] us in our need. And specially when our enemies shall be strong and mighty, and that nothing shall be able to let them here below, from oppressing us, then let us know that God will not cease to put to his helping hand. For we know what he hath said by his Prophet Esay (<236203> Isaiah 62:3) touching his Church, that it is more precious unto him, than all the Realms and Empires of this world.

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

That Isaack sowing, he gathered an hundred measures.

That is to say, an hundred times as much as he sowed. Here a question might be asked, seeing Isaack had not one foot of land, how he could sow. But some imagine that he had purchased some there: but this were against all reason. For it must be that the fathers content themselves, with the promise which was given them, and that they dwell in the land of promise as strangers. And indeed, it is said soon after, that Isaack pitched his tents, to declare that he had no certain house nor building. We see therefore that he was a vagabond in earth, as was his father Abraham: but he might well hire some land to sow therein: For he had a great family: as we saw Abraham himself had, who gathered out of his house more than four hundred chosen men, to enter into battle. Isaack had not much diminished it as we see: likewise it must be that he could not be much increased, especially dwelling in a strange country: he had hired some farm or taken some land to sow therein: according as we know that the ancient fathers, although God had enriched them, yet they ceased not to give themselves to labor both they and their household. For although they had both riches and commodities, yet they abused not those benefits that God had so

bountifully bestowed upon them, in poms nor in Idleness to become Kings: but to maintain always themselves in the mean estate. Mark then briefly that we have to learn, when Isaack having hired some possession sowed therein. And this is rehearsed of Moyses because he addeth, that GOD blessed him therein, and made him so to prosper, that he gathered in an hundredfold. But we shall find it strange in this country, which was so hungry and as it were barren in comparison of Judea and Syria, and of those Countries thereabouts: especially when he spake of an hundredfold, forasmuch as the thing may seem incredible unto us: because we esteem that which is spoken unto us according to that we have seen.

But it is not without cause that our Lord Jesus Christ, declareth this unto us by a similitude, taken from the seed which is sown: although he spake to another purpose: but notwithstanding he saith that when men shall sow, one part falleth into the path, and the fowls of the air devour it: another shall fall among stones, and this shall take no root: for it hath no nourishment: The other part shall be choked among bushes and thorns:

But that which falleth into good ground (saith he) shall bring fruit,
one thirty, the other sixty, and the last an hundredfold.

(<401323> Matthew 13:23)

When we come thus far (as I have said) we cannot be persuaded therein, unless the son of God had spoken it. But the ancient fathers, who have written of the land of Chaldea, and especially have been in the same place, and know it thoroughly, they say that the ordinary increase was eighty and an hundred. But here because he spake of the country of the Philistines which was fertile, but not as Chaldea, therefore Moyses rehearseth that, for a singular gift which God gave unto Isaack, that he gathereth an hundredfold. Lo here a sign of the blessing of God upon Isaack, yea concerning that, which belonged unto this transitory life. For although the ancient fathers always respected the heavenly inheritance, and bent all their affections thitherward: yet notwithstanding being mortal men, they needed that God should give them some taste of his goodness in this world. For that which Saint Paul saith, hath always place here:

That the fear of God hath the promises not only of everlasting life,
but also of this present life. (<540408> 1 Timothy 4:8)

While we are in this life God will not give us the fullness of those blessings he promiseth us: For in very deed, we would have our paradise here, and would cast our eyes no further but all our senses would be clean glutted, if GOD should give us in all respects such abundance as we require, and therefore he giveth us only a little taste of his goodness, to the end to draw us on further. But what though? yet can we but in part acknowledge that God is our father not only by the testimony that we have thereof from his mouth, but also by those blessings which he liberally bestoweth upon us. And here we behold both these things, in this history which Moyses setteth down: that is to say, that God blesseth his own, in such sort, that they have occasion to rejoice in him: and yet in that he divideth their morsels in such a portion, that they be always in mourning whilst they are in this world, and thereby are occasioned to cast their eyes farther. For mark our father Isaack, he prospereth, he increaseth, and becometh mighty, so saith Moyses: and he saith not only that God blessed him at once: but that he multiplied him in such sort that he always grew and waxed richer and richer. But on the other side he addeth:

That the Philistines envied him.

We see that Isaack had such cause to rejoice in God for the prosperity which was given unto him, that yet notwithstanding God awakened him, and mixed his sweet meat with some sour sauce. This was a great cause of joy unto him, when GOD did so sensibly multiply him. It was as it were a looking glass to all the Philistines, wherein to behold what it was to serve god: yet notwithstanding this turneth to his trouble and causeth him to be molested. We see then how God tempereth his benefits which he bestoweth liberally upon his children (I say, the temporal benefits which concern this life) that they can never settle themselves and rest therein. But yet here further a question might be asked, why God caused Isaack so to prosper, that the inhabitants of the country should rise up against him. Had it not been much better for him that he had continued in a mean estate, and had lived quiet under his tent than to be so enriched that everyone should war against him, and that they could not abide him, fearing lest he would become Lord over them, and tread them under his feet? If GOD had kept such a means, it seemeth that it had been more profitable to Isaack. Wherefore then is it that he doth multiply him, and that this is the cause that he is pursued, yea, and that he hath no water for himself neither for his family or for his cattle? But God is so wise in disposing all things, that

if he make his servants to prosper, he showeth them that they ought to keep themselves fast unto him, and that they have occasion to bless him. And yet notwithstanding: when he layeth them open to troubles and vexations, he turneth this also to their good. So then we must mark this for a rule, That all the graces which we receive from the hand of God in this world, they are joined with some miseries, and that our honey is never pure, but always there is some vinegar mixed with it: God could well take another course, if it had pleased him: but we must be subject unto him, and be content with that, that he doth, although that our senses and the lusts of our flesh resist against it. And true it is that a man which were well advised, would never seek to be rich or wealthy: and so that he might have competent for meat and drink and clothing: he would seek for no other state or condition. Yet notwithstanding it pleaseth God to exercise one sort with poverty, and to be bountiful towards others: and both poor and rich may be faithful, and both two the children of God. I speak not of all in general: but we see that there are some fearing God, who are not all of like estate, and condition. Some of them have wealth enough for their maintenance, yea and that to make them live with some credit and countenance amongst men: others some have scarcely a morsel of bread to eat.

Now if it were in us to order this matter, we would that God should use rather an equal and like measure: yea, but he knoweth wherefore, he choseth rather such a diversity. And therefore (as I have said) it is for us to content ourselves with his pleasure. And so when it pleaseth him to make his servants to prosper in such sort, that we may know for a surety that his blessing resteth in their persons, it is a testimony of his goodness: and hereof they ought to make their profit. But when there is any sourness mingled with it, they ought to think, GOD would not that I should sleep here, nor rest myself so upon these earthly benefits, that they should make me to forget everlasting life. It behooveth therefore that the faithful have this wisdom and consideration in them, that always they know how to make their profit, of those benefits that God bestoweth upon them: and in the meantime that they forget not the favor that he hath showed unto them? although that they have many cares, griefs, troubles and wrongs, which shall be done unto them by men. And namely here both the rich and poor, are taught their duty. When a man shall be afflicted with poverty and need, yet in the meantime god will not suffer him to be so destitute and

forsaken, but that always he shall have some little portion, to the end he may feel that God hath care of him. And therefore when the faithful have not all that they desire: but God leaveth them there as if he forsook them: they must not therefore murmur against him nor think that he hath cast them off: but how little so ever it be, that he hath given them (yea be it never so little) they must apply it to taste the goodness of God, so that they may call upon him as their father, and put their trust in him, and patiently bear their condition, which otherwise would be hard and miserable unto them. And as for the rich, when they shall have more wealth than they have need of, if this breed them any care, and bring some griefs as the common Proverb is: *He that hath land, hath war at hand.* If a man have but an Acre of ground, he shall either be drawn into suit of law, or else he shall have some other trouble about it. As for the rich (I say) when they see these things, that they cannot possess their goods with peace and quietness, but that they shall always have some trouble and disquietness withal: let them know that for all this, they must not be distasted, and that the blessing of god always giveth them courage to trust in him: and that they be not led to unthankfulness and forgetfulness: but that always they bless his name. And this is it that we have to note out of this place where it is said, that God make Isaack to prosper, and that this was the cause that moved the inhabitants of the country to envy him, who therefore did drive him out from amongst them. Now it is said expressly:

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

Here we see more clearly that which erst I touched: to wit, that they that are not well rooted in the fear of God may do virtuous acts: but this is as it were by blasts and they do not continue, there is no perseverance unless it be in them whom God governeth, and whom he hath so reformed by his holy spirit, and that his fear and obedience that they follow on their course till they come to the goal: yet notwithstanding even the faithful themselves are not so constant in well doing, but many times they tread awry and go out of the way: but God correcteth them, and when they are strayed here and there, he bringeth them back into the good way. But as for them whom he hath not yet regenerated and born anew, and who keep their natural inclination, although it seem oftentimes that they will do marvels, yet lo in the turning of a hand they are changed. We see this in the king of Gerar, ere while he was as an Angel: for when he spake of abusing another man's

wife, he said that it was to infect the whole country, and to cause the vengeance of God to come upon great and small. Behold, a divine sentence, it seemeth that God spake by his mouth, and indeed there is no doubt but that this confession was wrung from him both against himself, and against all those, who esteemed this (as a man should say) for a venial sin.

Behold then Abimelech who showeth that God had even enforced him and inflamed him with such a zeal, that he had this fault in great detestation, for he knew that it was displeasing to God. And thereupon he caused his Proclamation to be made, that no man should touch Isaack nor his wife, upon pain of death. This is yet another commendable point: It seemeth therefore that Abimelech was wholly become fearing GOD: but straightway after he saith unto Isaack, *Away, get thee hence*. He driveth out Isaack: he knoweth that Isaack is under the protection of God: and when he attempteth anything against him, is it not as it were to despise God, and to break the safeguard which he hath set upon his servant?

Let us learn therefore, that seeing it is so, to be so conversant amongst those which have no fear of God, as that, if they be gentle and courteous for a time unto us, and afterwards be changed, that we bear it with patience, and that we be ready to suffer injury of them, after they have done us good. Moreover let us know that unless God have imprinted his fear in us, and given us a lively root of it, we should never have any constancy or staidness in us. Let us pray unto him that it would please him to show unto us by effect, that he hath truly renewed us by his holy spirit: and that we have not a zeal like unto a fire of stubble which quickly goeth out: but that we may desire always to march on forwards in his obedience and to continue therein: and although that we sometimes slide from it, as we are very weak, notwithstanding that we be not clean misled and carried away from him, but that we may follow on our course even unto the end. And so we have to beseech him from day to day, that he will increase in us the graces of his holy spirit: for were our desire never so good, it is certain that we should be quickly cold: and as our nature is unconstant, we should from this day ere tomorrow be changed, were it not that God continued to govern us. This is it in sum that we have to mark. Now the reason that is here brought by Abimelech, is taken from common experience: For we know that rich men despise the poor, and he that hath much, thinketh that others are not equal unto him: thereupon is he by and by puffed up with pride and boldness, and cruelty followeth: as it is said,

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

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

Now we know hereby, how perverse we be: for in that God showeth himself liberal towards us, it is certain that he draweth near unto us, and draweth us near unto him: and this should give us an occasion to humble ourselves so much the more. For there is nothing that ought more to bring us into order, and to do our duty, than when God showeth himself on this sort unto us, and that we walk as it were in his sight. But if we abuse his graces, and (as I have already said) if riches engender [*beget*] in us both pride and presumption, and thereupon contempt of those which are our inferiors, and afterwards cruelty, so as we torment one and molest another: we devour this man here and that man there, is not this to turn light into darkness? So then we have to know the perversity which is in us, and whereunto we are not only inclined, but also given, unless that God do withdraw us from it. Now when God dealeth well with his children, it is certain that he doth correct this vice in them, that they have no lust to advance themselves, to put out their horns, and to show forth their jollities, and to tread under their feet those which are not equal unto them: and we have already declared, that there is always mingled a certain cooling, to the end they should not glory and flatter themselves too much in their felicity. Howsoever it be, it must be that he work herein by his holy spirit, for there will never be any modesty in us, whensoever any occasion is offered unto us to advance ourselves: the peel of an Onion (as the common Proverb saith) is enough to make us to forget from whence we are, and to make us drunken with arrogance, and to despise all other.

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

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

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

That Isaack came in to valley of Gerar.

He went not quite out of the country: but he went apart, to the end not to be anymore in their sight, and to take away all occasion of malice, from all the inhabitants of Gerar: for we know what manner of people the Philistines were. Here we see in the first place the patience of Isaack: who not only replied not: but to purchase peace and rest, trussed [*secured, bound*] up his baggage and went his way, to pitch his tent elsewhere, and herein he hath showed his humility. It is true that he went not quite out of the country: but yet notwithstanding he might have made some resistance, for to have tarried in that place, where he had as it were taken a Farm. We have seen that his father Abraham had as it were prepared a little army in his house: he might have therefore done the like, and so might have withstood the wrong which was done unto him. But he is so far off from this, that he is as it were a Lamb: and Moyses saith not, that he moved any great contention, or that he skirmished, though he were chased from them and that wrongfully, after they had received him, and after they had showed him some sign of courtesy: but he leaveth all. So then we are taught when we shall be oppressed, to bear our wrongs patiently, and not to take the sword in hand, to work our revenge, when it shall seem that we

have a just cause before men. For we know what is commanded us: to wit, to give place unto wrath: that is, to suffer that God revenge for us, and so let us follow our father Isaack, in that that he suffered himself, to be wickedly driven out of the country, where he had so behaved himself, that he ought rather to have been beloved of all. For what occasion had they given them that they should suspect any evil in him? And yet notwithstanding they cast him out, and say that he is too strong, as though he had abused his greatness. So this is one lesson touching this retreat of Isaack, where it is said that he came into the valley of Gerar.

Now Moyses addeth another temptation, which was very hard unto him: and that was that he had digged the wells that his father Abraham had digged in his lifetime, and that he kept the same names that was given unto them. Here we see in the first place the malice of the Philistines, although that Abraham had lived very courteously amongst them: yea and that Abimelech this man's predecessor, had made a league with him, and came to seek him, and Abraham in way of homage, had given him one of the Wells that he had digged, which he had bought again, and had presented the homage unto him as we have seen: yet notwithstanding all this, that they came to dam up these wells. They knew that Abraham was the servant of God and a Prophet: God had maintained his quarrel, and they had a visible testimony thereof: for even the house of Abimelech had been beaten, and GOD had scourged it: and therefore they might have been moved thereby to have suffered him: and albeit they had not for a time been well advised, seeing that Abraham had protested that he would not do wrong nor hurt any, as he had been sworn to Abimelech: they should have contented themselves herewith: they had known the man to be very loyal, and keeping his promise where he had made it: notwithstanding to the end he should never return again, they dammed up the Wells which he had digged: for there is no doubt, but this was done to the end to shut him out from coming anymore amongst them: For as he was a stranger, he might have sought out a place fit for him to dwell in: as if you would say, at the leastwise I shall have Water, and again there is some pasture for my Cattle. So then, he might have returned back again: but what do they? O when the water shall be taken away from him, he shall be constrained to seek pasture elsewhere: he can never return hither again. See here a vile and mischievous malice: but let us know that it is God's will, that his children should be so molested, to prove their patience. And again, let us note that

all falleth out to the confusion of the wicked, when they are so unkind against the servants of God: For it is certain that if Abraham had dwelt there, the blessing of God had rested in that Country. And when it is here rehearsed of Isaack, that he gathered in an hundredth fold so much as he sowed, there is no doubt but that the land was fertile, and that all his neighbors tasted of the favor of God. To be short, the children of God always give some sweet savor of his mercy: and we have seen that which was said of Sodom and Gomorrhé, that if God could only have but found one ten, the City had not been sunk.

But see the contemners of GOD and the unfaithful, who drive out the faithful from amongst them, and cannot abide them: and this shall always turn to their own confusion. In the meanwhile God will have pity upon his own, and howsoever they be thrust out of the world, are persecuted, and have not where to set their foot, yet will he always find some refuge and shadow for them: but yet we must be armed with great patience, when men are so cruel unto us, that we can find no equity amongst them, that they are as mad beasts: yet must we endure all this, that we may be armed with the spirit of God, which is the spirit of lenity. For certain it is that we need nothing to make us to cast out our poison: For we are so delicate and nice, that we can suffer nothing, and we are always ready to revenge our own quarrels. We shall therefore never be so gentle, to bear the wrongs that are done unto us, unless that GOD govern us by his holy Spirit: but howsoever it be, the example of the fathers is here set before us, to the end we should learn, not to vex and disquiet ourselves too much, when men torment us in any manner of sort whatsoever.

Moreover it is said here expressly, that *Isaack kept the names of the Wells*, as we have seen of Beersheba, which was the Well of the oath, inasmuch as Abimelech had there sworn with Abraham. Now this was to maintain possession: For this was as much as a public instrument or Indenture, or rather more. Abimelech had made a league there with Abraham: Lo, a promise made with a solemn ceremony, Abraham had acknowledged homage unto him for the Wells: the name testifieth the same. So that Isaack pretendeth that the inhabitants knew, that this was a parcel of the inheritance which his father had purchased, for him, and therefore that it was his own by law. But all this prevaieth nothing, what just title so ever he had, yet notwithstanding they cease not to quarrel against him. Thus we see, howsoever the children of God seek nothing else, but to enjoy that

which is their own, and which it is lawful for them to use: notwithstanding they shall be thrust from it. For the contemners of God are impudent: and whatsoever men allege unto them, yet neither reason nor equity can prevail with them, and be made account of. When we shall see the like at this day, let us not think it a new and strange thing. There was more simplicity in that time then, and yet nevertheless we see that Isaack must be thrust from all that which he pretended is justly to be his, as was possible.

Now thereupon it is said, that he gave names to these two Wells which were taken from him, that is to say, for which he was drawn into law: that is to say, from which he was put: For it booted him not to plead, as at this day: but by violence he is driven out of possession. Now there is no doubt when he gave these names of strife and brabble [*obstinate disputing*], or contention, but that this was done, as if he made his complaint to God, when he saw that men's ears were deaf, and all reasons excluded: he hath no other way, but this to set up a memorial, to the end God might have pity upon him. Now therefore let us learn, when we can gain nothing by bringing forth our titles and right to keep that which is ours, and that which is given us: that yet notwithstanding we leave not off to trust that in the end God will have pity upon us. Lo then what we have to do: That is, that as much as lieth in us, we endeavor that men may leave us peace, and that they come not to devour us. This shall always be lawful to the children of God: For howsoever we be commanded to be as sheep amongst Wolves, yet hath God permitted unto us a peaceable defense, inasmuch as he hath taken us into his hands.

We must endeavor therefore, as much as lieth in us, to repel all violences, wrongs, outrages and riots, that shall be done unto us, and all molestations that can be devised against us. Have we done this? If we gain nothing, and that men be so obstinately bent to mischief, and specially if they be possessed with such fury, that all reason be trodden under foot amongst them, let us have recourse unto God, and pray him that it will please him to take our cause into his own hands: and doubt we not, when men shall become so uncourteous, that they shall deride at whatsoever we can allege, that in the end God will take order with them. Lo then what we have to bear away of the example of Isaack, when he named the wells. Strife, debate and contention. For this was not of Choler, or of the Spleen: as there are very many which will revenge themselves, and cast out some injurious word: but Isaack commended his cause to God: as also we are

exhorted by Saint Peter, that if we be envied of men and can find no remedy at their hands, that then we wait when God will put to his hand, as surely he will.

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

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

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

But Isaack did not so: but although he was driven out, and that he had endured this for a longtime, yet so soon as God had given him release, he blesseth his name, and saith, God hath enlarged me. Lo (saith he) the *largesses* or *bounties* of GOD, which I behold in this Well. But now in the end we have to note the patience of Isaack, when we preach nowadays of patience, hardly can we get this point, that if we have to endure never so

little, we be not by and by hot and angry: and when it seemeth that we are very patient, yet there will always be some grudging, unless God even at the first push comfort us: and in the mean season, what suffer we? Surely in a manner nothing. If we endure but a fillip, O, it is so hard as nothing can be harder: and moreover if men go on to do us wrong, O, we suffer too much. But we are far off from this lenity and softness, which is here showed us in our father Isaack. We will say I cannot bear it. If any man wrong us, but the value of three halfpence, or of some small portion of our good: O I cannot endure it: this is too much. Yea but Isaack strived for water (I say strived,) he took not a sword to fight: but he suffered wrong: although he had digged the wells, and his father had purchased them with his own proper good, and that the King had made him a grantee, and that he had digged them again, and taken a great deal of travel to have water to drink, notwithstanding all this, we see his patience. And so when God shall afflict us, and shall loose the bridle to the wicked, that we shall be pilled and polled of them, let us yet know that we are not come to that extremity, not to have a drop of water, and to have those elements taken from us, which God would have common amongst men. For every man will have his portion apart, both of corn, and of wine, of flesh, and such like things, and of moveable and possessions: everyone will have his own: but as for water, it is an Element which GOD hath ordained for all men.

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

But now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our sins, praying him that it will please him in such sort to

make us to feel them, that it may be to make us to be displeased with ourselves for them: and that we may learn more and more to conform ourselves to his holy will, renouncing ourselves. And that it will please him in such sort to bear with us in our weaknesses and vices, that we do not therewith nourish them: but that he will more and more purge us until he have stripped us of all carnal affections, and clothed us anew with the affections of his holy spirit: to the end we may so behave ourselves with men, that whatsoever yet we have whereof to advance ourselves, we cease not to lowly and humble. And when we be oppressed that therefore we give not over to be courageous, always to submit ourselves to him which is able to help us: and that he will not only show us this grace, but also to all peoples and nations of the Earth etc.