

## SERMON LIII.

*Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead ; from whence also he received him in a figure.—HEB. xi. 19.*

HERE we have—

1. The working of his faith under this trial—*Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.*

2. The fruit and success of it—*from whence also he received him in a figure.*

*First,* See the manner how his faith wrought — λογίζομενος, ‘Accounting,’ or reasoning. When we have any notable work to do, we are full of thoughts and full of reasonings. The soul of man being an understanding essence, it will not be settled without sound reason. Now in all these debates it is excellent when reason serves faith, when that which was wont to be an enemy is made a servant and handmaid to faith. Nothing is so great an enemy to faith as reason, and the perverse disputings of our own mind; but when reason is made a handmaid, it is an excellent advantage. Abraham reasoned, ‘God was able to raise him up.’ What shall we learn from this reasoning of Abraham?

*Obs. 1.* In difficult cases we must take the duty part to ourselves, and refer the event and success to the power of God.

We must do our work; let God see to the fulfilling of his promises, and let us see to the discharge of our duty. Abraham offered Isaac, he reckoned ‘God was able to raise him up;’ let him see to that: 2 Sam. x. 12, ‘Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.’ This is the right way; let us mind that which is our work, and leave to God that which is his work. To be troubled about events, carking about the success of things, is to take God’s work out of his hands, and neglect our own. In every work there is a duty and a the burden. What shall we do? that is the question which concerns duty; but what shall become of us? that is the question which concerns burden. The duty belongs to us, and the burden, that must be turned off upon God: Ps. lv. 22, ‘Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he shall sustain thee.’ If a man were to go a journey, would he take a burden upon him? Look, as God laid your sins upon Christ, so he will have your burdens to be cast upon himself—‘Cast your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you,’ 1 Peter v. 7. It is no more dishonour to God to bear our burdens than for Christ to bear our sins. I shall urge two arguments.

1. It will ease the soul of a great deal of trouble. In all doubtful events carking and trouble ariseth from encroaching upon God, from minding more work than what is our own. For instance, in duties of your calling, in dangers, when God calls you to go through them, as women with child, or in the main duties of religion, mind what is your duty, and refer the success and event to God: Phil. iv. 5, ‘Be careful for nothing.’ What! must we be careless, senseless? I answer, No, not careless of the work, nor senseless of the danger; but we must do

the work, and refer all to God as to the success; we must be mindful of the danger, and then commend it to God by prayer. We would not be so uncomfortable as we are if we would learn this, if we would not care after the event what we shall eat, what we shall drink, or where-withal we shall be clothed, and what will become of us, but turn that upon God. In any danger, when a call is evident, What would God have me to do? is our question, not, What will become of me?

2. It would keep us upright. When men will be meddling with more than belongs to them, they will turn aside to crooked ways. It is fear of success, and distrust of the event, makes us to act unworthily. When we are troubled about the event, we shall either neglect duty or take such a course as is more likely to carnal reason. If Abraham had taken care of the promise, Isaac had never been offered; but Abraham takes care of the command; the promise was God's part, and God's work in the covenant. Always the cause of miscarrying is stepping out of our bounds, and taking of God's work out of his hands.

*Obs. 2.* To encourage us to cast our burden upon God, we should consider his fidelity and his ability, or his truth and his power.

One is implied, the other expressed. Truth is implied, in that he looked for Isaac to be restored to him again because of the promise; and the ground of his expectation is expressed to be God's almighty power—'God is able,' &c. Sometimes we find truth and mercy joined together as the grounds of hope; we find this seven times in Ps. lxxxix. All three are grounds of trust—mercy and power, and truth engaged by a promise. So Bernard, *Tria considero quibus tota spes mea consistit, caritatem adoptionis, veritatem promissionis, et potestatem redditionis.*—There are three things that do support my hope; there is the readiness of grace, the truth of the promise, and the power of performance; this is a triple cord, that is not easily broken. But I will not wander. Here we are to consider two attributes, truth and power, which, as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses, so do these support our faith, and hold up our hearts in waiting upon God. Abraham's faith and Sarah's faith do well together. If you mark in scripture, Sarah is commended for the acknowledging of God's truth: Heb. xi. 11, 'She judged him faithful who had promised.' And then Abraham's faith is pitched upon God's power: Rom. iv. 21, 'Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform.' So here in the text, he knew 'God was able to raise him up from the dead.' Before he had a son, he expected him from God's power; and when he hath a son, he offers him up upon the confidence of God's power. He made no question of his truth, but having a large heart, being more sensible of the difficulties, he magnified God's power. And that which supported Abraham should support us; that God can do whatever he pleaseth, there is his power; and that God will do whatever he hath promised, there is his truth,—here are the two grounds which uphold our heart.

1. For God's truth, a word of that. Meditate upon the truth of God, if you would be supported in believing. Abraham had such high thoughts of it that he was confident that God would disturb the whole course of nature rather than not make good his word—that he should have his Isaac given him from the dead, that he would raise up an

Isaac out of the ashes of the sacrifice, rather than the promise should not be performed: he would pitch upon anything rather than to count God unfaithful. God will dissolve and alter the whole frame of the world rather than lose his truth; he stands much upon the honour of his faithfulness. Say then to your souls, Surely it cannot be but God must be true; that which God hath promised must come to pass. That which supported Abraham will also support us, if we had hearts to make use of it. God stands more upon the honour of his truth than upon aught else: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' The word of God is a monument of God's truth, as the works of God and the course of nature are the monuments of his wisdom and power. Now the monuments of his wisdom and power shall be defaced rather than the monuments of his truth—'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of my word shall pass away,' Mat. v. 18. 'There is not a waste word in the covenant that shall fall to the ground: Ps. xii. 7, 'The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.' There is no dross in the promises, but all pure; none of them shall fall to the ground. His power is beyond his declared will; he can do no more than he hath done, or will do, but it doth not come short of it; he hath not promised more than he is able to perform; and his truth engageth his power: Heb. x. 23, 'He is able that hath promised.'

2. For the power of God. And here I shall show—

(1.) That God's power is the great encouragement to faith. (2.) How hard a matter it is to believe God's power. (3.) How sinful it is not to believe it. (4.) To direct you what to do in this case.

[1.] God's power is the great encouragement of faith. From first to last we are still directed to depend and cast ourselves upon the power of God. In our first coming to God, waiting upon him for the work of conversion, what will support a poor soul that is troubled with the power of its corruption? God is able. When Christ told his disciples, Mat. xix. 23, 'That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of God,' the disciples wondered: ver. 25, 'Who then can be saved?' But Christ answers, ver. 26, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' The heart of man is not too hard for God, for then he would have a creature more mighty than himself. He is able to overpower the corruption of a man's heart: Eph. i. 19, 20, 'What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead;' and Rom. iv. 17, 'God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were.' But then, when once we are gotten in with God, what is it that supports us, and keeps us up, and carries us through the whole business of salvation? The power of God: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed: and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.' How come the children of God to put their souls into God's hands?—'I know he is able;' 1 Peter i. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and Jude 24, 'Unto him that is able to keep you from falling.' This supports the soul in the midst of all assaults and temptations that we meet with in the present life—'God is able to keep us.' And then for

abilities of grace and present supplies : Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me ;' Eph. vi. 10, 'My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' It is the power of God that carrieth us through : 2 Peter i. 3, 'The divine power giveth us all things pertaining to life and godliness.' So also for things to come. The resurrection is a very riddle to nature, that life should spring out of death, that the way to go upward is to go downward to the grave, that our dust shall be severed from common dust, and every flesh shall have his own body—riddles to nature. But that which doth facilitate, and makes the belief of it easy, is the mighty power of God : Phil. iii. 21, 'Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.' This is that which supports the soul in an expectation of the blessed resurrection. Therefore the Sadducees that denied the resurrection, Christ tells them, Mat. xxii. 29, 'Ye err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.' The scriptures show what shall be, and the power of God what may be. So for all public promises, for the calling of the Jews ; when a man considers how obstinate and hardened they are in their prejudices against Christ, who would think the Jews should ever be called? Nay, when we consider still how that people are scattered up and down in the world, we know not what is become of the ten tribes, the remnant of them ; yet it is said, 'God is able to graft them in again.' So for the avenging of antichrist ; when we consider how antichrist is supported with the interests, and power, and force of princes, and how the nations wonder after the whore, we cry out, How shall these things be accomplished? Rev. xviii. 8, 'Her plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire ; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.' Still we are referred to the power of God ; so that the life and vigour of faith is very much concerned in the belief of God's power. And he that believes the first article of the creed, 'God, the Father Almighty,'—will easily believe all the rest. It is put in the front to show how all those things shall be accomplished—'The forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.'

[2.] Let me show you how difficult it is to believe his power. Do but consider what our foolish thoughts do most of all dash themselves against, clearly at the power of God, for men never doubt but in case of danger and difficulty. When things go on happily, then they are secure ; but as soon as dangers and difficulties arise, they are full of fears, suspicions, and distrust. What should be the reason, but only doubting of God's power? Observe the instances of scripture, and you shall find the greatest stumbings of unbelief have always been at God's power ; as in Sarah : Gen xviii. 12, 'After I am old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' she urgeth the difficulty ; so Moses : Num. xi. 21, 22, 'There are six hundred thousand footmen, and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat for a whole month together. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?' so Ps. lxxviii. 19, 'Can the Lord prepare a table in the wilderness?' It is not will the Lord, but can the Lord do it? There

we dash our unbelieving thought. So 2 Kings vii. 2, 'If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?' So the virgin Mary, when the message was brought to her by the angel, that she should conceive Christ in her womb, and her substance should be assumed and sanctified, and concur to the making up of the person of Christ, she replies, Luke i. 34, 'How can this be?' Men deceive themselves when they think they doubt of the will of God; their main hesitancy, and sticking, is at the power of God. So when Christ came to raise Lazarus, saith Martha, John xi. 39, 'He stinketh by this time, for he hath been dead four days;' as if it were past the power of God to raise him up. And thus we do, we can easily believe the power of God in the theory. A man may draw out a fluent discourse of the omnipotency of God, and yet not be able to confute his own unbelief. To make a practical improvement of the power of God in time of distress and danger, that is no easy matter. And it ariseth, partly, from the imperfection of our understanding. A young child does not know his father's strength. We are poor weak creatures, and cannot conceive fully of the perfections of God; we know not what the power of God can do for us. And partly, because we are inured to principles of sense, and regard the ordinary working of second causes; therefore if there be any rub in God's way, we stumble presently. And partly, because there is such a deep and strong sense of present danger and difficulty that all actual thoughts of God's power are shut out when we are put upon temptation, and the soul hath not liberty to think of it; therefore it is we dash here most against God's power.

[3.] I come to show that this is a great sin, God takes it ill to be circumscribed and limited in his power. It is his complaint, Ps. lxxviii. 41, 'They limited the Holy One of Israel.' The great sin of Israel in the wilderness was circumscribing and confining God to the course and circle of second causes. So he that doubted, 2 Kings vii. 2, 'If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?' And you know what exemplary judgment God laid upon him, God let him live to see it, and then he was trodden to death—God let him live to see his unbelief confuted, but he had no benefit by it. Now why is it such a heinous sin to question God's power? Partly, because this is to deny him to be God; if God were not omnipotent, he could not be a help to his friends nor a terror to his enemies. And partly, to deny him his power is to pull him out of the throne, because we have so much to prove and evidence the omnipotency of God that therefore it is the more heinous sin to deny it. It is a thing plainly displayed in the creation: Rom. i. 20, 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.' His goodness is wrapt up in the covenant; his love is displayed in the church; but his power is displayed before all the world. The heathens see the invisible things of his goodness and power. We cannot be certain of his will in many things, but there is enough to inform us of the power of God.

[4.] To direct you how to make use of God's power so as to find support in it. I answer—

(1.) In mercies absolutely promised we may reason from his power

to his will. If God be able, surely it will be accomplished: Rom. xi. 23, 'They shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.' It is the apostle's own argument. In the temple there were two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, 1 Kings vii. 21; the one signifies 'strength and might,' and the other 'God will establish it.' So Dan. iii. 17, the three children having particular instinct and revelation, therefore they say, 'Our God is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us.' So John x. 28, 29, 'They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' Christ reasons from his power; he would have us secure our souls upon the omnipotency of God; he must pluck God out of his throne, before he can hinder the salvation of his people.

(2) In mercies conditionally promised, there we are to magnify his power, and refer the matter to his will: as Mat. viii. 2, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' Give him the glory of his power, and refer your case to his will; God will do what is for the best.

(3) In all cases take this rule: whatever be your discouragements to weaken faith, difficulty or unlikelihood should be none, because of the almighty power of God in whom we trust. Usually the great cause of discouragement is danger and difficulty, now that is dishonourable to God; we should conceive of him by his power: Job xlii. 2, 'I know that thou canst do everything;' so Dan. iii. 17, 18, 'Our God is able, and he will deliver us; but if not, we will not serve thy gods'; we will not be discouraged with the difficulty of the case. This will strike all discouragements down, when we have right apprehensions of God's power.

*Use.* If this be the great attribute that will support our faith, the power of God, then it presseth you to meditate often upon the power of God. The life of faith and confidence lies in it. How shall we do to improve the power of God in meditation?

1. Consider how much God's power can outwork our thoughts. God were not infinite if he could be comprehended; surely he hath more power than we are able to apprehend, therefore we can never be competent judges of it. Look, as we cannot empty the ocean with a nut-shell, so neither can we fathom the depth of God with the plummet of our thoughts. We no more know God than a worm knows a man. There is a greater distance between God and a man than between a worm and a man; both are finite creatures, but God is infinite, and therefore we cannot fathom God, and so we are unmeet judges of his power. When our thoughts are able to reach no farther, yet God can outreach our thoughts: Zech. viii. 6, 'If it be marvellous in your eyes, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of Hosts.' The Lord was angry there because they confined him to the model of their own thoughts—because they would measure infiniteness by their own last—because we cannot see how a thing should be done, shall we conclude that therefore God cannot do it? God can outgo our thoughts: Eph. iii. 20, 'Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.'

2. Consider the special instances of God's power.

[1.] In creation. O christian! remember the creating power of God.

David saith, Ps. cxxiv. 8, 'Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.' As if the psalmist had said, As long as I see heaven and earth I will never distrust. I hope in that God which made all these things out of nothing; and therefore as long as I see those two great standing monuments of his power before me, heaven and earth, I will never be discouraged. So the apostle: 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.' O christian! remember when you trust God you trust an almighty creator, who is able to help, let your case be never so desperate. God could create when he had nothing to work upon, which made one wonder, What is become of the tools wherewith he made the world? Where is the trowel wherewith he arched the heaven? and the spade wherewith he digged the sea? What had God to work upon, or work withal when he made the world? He made it out of nothing. Now you commit your souls to the same faithful creator. Then,—

[2.] Consider the providence of God, that will help you; partly, because providence is nothing else but a continued creation. The same power that made all things upholds all things; and this is a great relief to the soul, for it shows us that God is the same still: Isa. xl. 28, 'Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth doth, not faint, neither is weary?' There is no wrinkle upon the brow of eternity. He that made all things by his word holds all things by his own almighty grasp; and if he loosen his hand, and take away the influence and supportation of his providence, all things would return to nothing again. And partly, because providence gives us new instances of God's power in sustaining and governing all the world, providing for all creatures. You trust in him that fills the mouth of every living thing, and that keeps a table for all the world: Ps. cxlv. 16, 'Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' How many mouths doth God feed only with opening his hand? The whole creation hangs upon him, as vessels do upon a nail in a sure place.

[3.] Then consider not only God's general providence, but your own particular experiences. Experience is a most affective and near thing; and things wherein we are concerned ourselves leave a more sensible impression upon the soul: Rom. v. 4, 'Experience worketh hope.' When we have had a particular trial of God's power, we can the more readily trust him. I verily believe Abraham's experience was a mighty confirmation to his faith. For mark—it is said, 'He accounted God was able to raise him from the dead; from whence also he had received him in a figure.' God had given Isaac, as it were, from the dead at the first: ver. 12, 'Therefore sprang there of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of the sky for multitude, and as the sands on the sea-shore innumerable;' so Rom. iv. 19, 'He considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.' I say this made him more capable of this reasoning and arguing, because he had experience God had given him Isaac from a dead body and a dead womb; therefore he concluded God was able to raise him from the dead. So for our particular trials; when we have had experience of the power of God, it is a mighty con-

firmation of our faith. The apostle saith, 2 Cor. i. 9, 10, 'We have had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raised the dead. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.' If you have had great deliverances and experiences of the power of God, this is a mighty confirmation in believing. And then consider the spiritual experiences, and not only experiences in general; partly because these are the highest instances of God's power. God showed a great deal of power in making the world, but he shows more power in renewing the heart of man; for as there was nothing to work upon in making the world, so nothing to resist; but when he comes to form you anew, and create you in Christ Jesus to good works, there was a great deal of resistance; that God which hath overpowered thy spiritual corruptions hath herein showed us his power. And partly, because this is an engaging instance, that they may wait upon God for the future effects of his power, *Deus donando debet*. I urge this the rather because the apostle urgeth us to consider of it: Eph. i. 19, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward that believe.' He doth not refer us to the power of God, by which the world was made, but that which works in them that believe. Again, Eph. iii. 20, 'Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.' He doth not speak of his mighty power which made the world, or that wrought then in the church in working of miracles; no, but the mighty power that worketh in our hearts, and thence gathers that God is able to do far above what we can ask or think.

*Obs.* 3. God's power reacheth to the grave, and beyond the grave, even to give life to the dead.

God can not only preserve the creatures while they are in life and being, but when life is lost he can restore it again. It is an easier matter to make a vessel out of clay, than when it is dashed into pieces to restore and set it up in form again. So here God did not only make us at first out of nothing, but when we are broken into pieces again, he can raise us from the dead. Abraham had no experience of the resurrection as we have, yet Abraham concluded thus, Oh, let it shame us! The apostle argues, Acts xxvi. 8, 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?' Abraham believed the resurrection at that distance: Christ was not then risen, there were none ever quickened from the dead, yet he believed God was able to raise Isaac out of his ashes; but we have more reason to believe it. There is no more reason to disbelieve the resurrection than the creation. It is as easy for God to raise us up as it was for God to make us at first; it is as easy for God to do one as the other.

*Obj.* You will say, What needs all this ado? surely we believe the resurrection.

*Ans.* I doubt you do not as much as you should. For—

1. If you did believe the resurrection, why are you so easily amazed at lesser difficulties? John xi. 24, 25, Christ confutes Martha; Martha said, 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live; believest thou



this?' Canst thou believe the general resurrection, and canst thou not believe this, that I can raise him up now? Christians, in every difficult case your faith in the resurrection of the dead is tried when you come to depend upon God in extreme danger. So much is intimated by Paul: 2 Cor. i. 9, 'We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.' God tries whether you can trust him that raiseth the dead, when the dead are gone and lost as to outward appearance and probability. If you cannot depend upon God, and magnify his power, and refer yourselves to his will in difficult cases, how can you say you believe the resurrection?

2. If you have such a faith, this will bewray itself in life and death. That hope is worth nothing that is good for nothing. As—

[1.] This faith will discover itself in life. If we believe the resurrection, we will count the faithful fulfilling of Christ's will better than all the pleasures of the world; that faith will have such an influence upon your life. Faith is discovered in action in the course of your conversation. They that are not such manner of persons do not look for such things, 2 Peter iii. 11. Doth he look for the resurrection that useth his body only as a strainer for meats and drinks? that prostitutes his body to base lusts? that doth not employ himself with labour and diligence in the work God hath given him to do?

[2.] You will know the strength of this faith in death. Can we see life at the back of it? Can we desire death, and check the fears of it? Can we triumph over the last enemy, and be constant in Christ's cause to the latter end? and die cheerfully upon this ground, because we look for a joyful resurrection? A man goes to bed willingly and cheerfully, because he knows he shall rise again the next morning, and be renewed in his strength. Confidence in the resurrection would make us go to the grave as cheerfully as we go to our beds; it would make us die more comfortably, and sleep more quietly in the bosom of the Lord.

*From whence also he received him in a figure.*

*Secondly*, the success of his faith is the next thing to be spoken to. There is a great deal of ado about the meaning of that place. Some look backward and refer it to the time past, as if the meaning were, he looked God should raise him from the dead, because from thence he received him in a figure, that is, he had him from the dead before, from a dead womb and a dead body; but I think that is not so proper. Some look forwards, and refer it to the time to come, either to Christ or the resurrection. To Christ: Isaac was a type or figure of Christ's dying and rising. Or to the resurrection: his being freed from his present danger was an image of the resurrection from the dead, but it is not *for* a figure or a type, but *in* a figure; and therefore I think it is nothing but thus—he was even as good as dead, dead in his father's purpose and in his own thoughts; and from thence he received him again; which also was a kind of image of the resurrection from the dead; he that was just offered, and bound to the altar, seemed as it were to rise again.

Here I might observe several things.

*Obs.* 1. That in extremity God will be seen.

All was as good as dead, and yet he receives him again, when the knife was just at his throat : Gen. xxii. 10, 'And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.' When he had lifted up his hand, just as the knife was at his throat, then the Lord speaks to him and saith, Offer not Isaac. So Paul, 2 Cor. i. 9, when he had the sentence of death, was ready to be torn in pieces, then God useth such a dispensation. When Christ was brought to the very brow of the hill, and they thought to throw him down, then he escaped, Luke iv. 29. 30. And when there was but a hair's breadth between the Jews and ruin in Esther's time, then posts were sent to stop execution. Thus the Lord casts his people into great extremities to try their trust. When the case is desperate, and in human sense we are gone, then God appears : Ps. cxviii. 18, 'The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death.'

*Obs. 2.* The success of believing. Believe and have ; he counted God would raise him from the dead, and then he received him again. God's power, when glorified by an actual faith, will turn to a good account. When we trust God, we lose nothing by it. Trust among men is engaging. If another man trust you, in ingenuity you will not disappoint and fail him. Sure, then, God will not fail a trusting soul : John xi. 40, 'Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?' We shall not see the power of God, nor the beauty of his providence, if we do not trust him. It is said in the Gospel, 'Christ could do no mighty works, because of their unbelief,' Mark xiii. 58, compared with Mark vi. 5. He could not, because he would not. Where his power is not glorified, there it shall not be exercised : 2 Chron. xvi. 8, 'Because thou didst rely on the Lord, therefore he hath delivered them into thine hand.' God is mightily pleased and honoured by it ; and a waiting and trusting soul shall never be disappointed. Abraham counted God was able, and then he hath his Isaac again.

*Obs. 3.* Faith doth succeed always, though not in the way that we imagine and fore-conceive.

Abraham looked for Isaac out of the ashes of the sacrifice, but God gave him in another manner. The Lord doth not love that we should always see his way and work ; for he will not only glorify his power in the eyes of them that believe, but he will glorify his wisdom, and will accomplish deliverance in a way they thought not of : Isa. xlv. 15, 'Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.' God loves to be a saviour under a veil ; to hide himself, that we shall not see the way of his working ; so Isa. xlvi. 7, 'They are created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day when thou heardest them not ; lest thou shouldst say, Behold I knew them.' God will not have a creature look to the end of his work ; and therefore let us not limit the Holy One of Israel, nor confine him to our means, but leave God to his own way and work. God will do that he hath promised, though we cannot imagine how. There are hidden depths of God's dispensations ; he often carries himself very closely and covertly.

*Obs. 4.* Though things do not succeed in a way we forecast and imagine, yet they shall succeed in a better way.

It was better to have Isaac saved in this manner than to have him slain, and burnt to ashes, and then restored again. So God's way still is the best way, our way is not so good a way as God will find out for us; therefore do not confine him to a model of your own framing, but leave God to his own way.

*Obs. 5.* We receive our comforts anew and our relations anew from God every time when they are rescued out of imminent danger.

It is said he received him. How? Abraham twice received him; first in his birth by the grant of God—he was born when Abraham was aged; and now Isaac hath a new life, he received him again. Therefore when God gives in a relation to you out of a hazardous case, as wife, children, or husband, after a dangerous sickness, receive them as new pledges of God's love, take them as mercies newly bestowed. They seem to have a new life that are preserved in an imminent danger.

*Use.* If we would do as Abraham did, we must—

1. Acknowledge the supremacy and sovereignty of God, that he hath an absolute power over his creatures to do with them as he pleaseth, either as to life or death. This relieved Abraham as to the lawfulness of the fact, and this will be a great help to us in all our submission to God: 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12, 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted, as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.' He hath power to command us and ours, and what he commandeth we must yield unto. All cometh of him, and we hold all from him and for him. All is at his dispose, he hath power to take away from us, will we, nill we, only he dealeth with us as rational creatures, leaveth us to our choice. Willingly to yield to him is an act of grace, but to be discontented with his dealings showeth we would withhold from him what we could.

2. That the Lord's wisdom is infinite, and he can solve those difficulties which are mere riddles to us; and therefore all thoughts of ours are to be captivated to his will, for he hath ways and means to bring about his purposes, which come not within our ken and perceivance. Alas! how easily will reason be nonplussed in what concerneth either our obedience or our faith. Christ's words to Peter are of use here: John xiii. 7, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' There are many things which we know not the reason of; but wait a little while, and obey the voice of God, and all things shall be clear and evident. He is wise in heart, and 'wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,' Isa. xxviii. 29; and therefore we owe him blind obedience. He that can bring all things out of nothing, light out of darkness, meat out of the eater, one contrary out of another, deserveth to be waited upon with a constant reliance. We cannot dive into the depth of his counsel, but must yield an implicit obedience to his will, and go on with our duty, referring events to him; we must absolutely yield to his will because it is his will, and wait his leisure, till we know the reason of it.

3. That that which we give to God out of true faith and love shall be

received again one way or other. Isaac was dead in Abraham's purpose, yet Isaac lived, and was received in a figure. That which is spent in charity is lost to us in all visible appearance, yet it is lent to the Lord, and he will pay it again: Prov. xix. 17, 'He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again;' and Eccles. xi. 1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days;' all is thought to be cast away as if were thrown into the sea, but it will be repaid with advantage. So what is lost for God's sake shall be found again: Mat. xvi. 25, 'Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.'

4. When we have had experience of what God can do in former difficulties, we should the less stick at latter. This was Abraham's case, he had received Isaac, as from the dead: Rom. iv. 19, 'He considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb;' Heb. xi. 12, 'Therefore sprang there, even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude.' Isaac's conception, generation, and birth, were above the power of nature; his generation was a kind of resurrection, or very like it; when he begat him he was as dead; and Sarah's womb, as to any generative power, was dead too; therefore it is added, ver. 19, 'Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead: from whence he had received him in a figure.' So to us in like manner: Mat. xvi. 8, 9, 'O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?' They had experience that Christ could give bread at pleasure; to be anxious about worldly things after he had shown that he can feed many with a little food, showed a weak faith.

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## SERMON LIV.

*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.—*  
HEB. xi. 20.

THE apostle, after he had spoken of Abraham, proceeds to speak of Isaac. That which was notable in his story is the blessing of Jacob and Esau, wherein he showed much faith, though some weakness. His faith is here described—

1. By the act whereabout it was conversant—*He blessed.*
2. The persons so blessed—*Jacob and Esau.*
3. The matter of the blessing—*Concerning things to come,* where the strength of his faith is intimated, that though these blessings were not for a long time to be accomplished, yet that he could pronounce them so confidently in God's name. To open these circumstances.

[1.] The act whereabout his faith was conversant—'He blessed.' There is a blessing by way of prayer, and a blessing by way of prophecy.