

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.

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.

By way of prayer, as ordinary parents bless their children, praying for blessings for them. Or else by way of prophecy, foretelling what should befall them in time to come. Of this kind is Isaac's blessing; to which also Noah's is exactly parallel, his blessing Shem and Japheth afterward, and his cursing Ham: Gen. ix. 25-27, 'Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.' There is much in the ordinary blessing of parents. Micah, you know, was afraid of his mother's curse, Judges xvii. 2. The Lord, to keep up a reverence and a respect to parents, takes notice of their blessings and curses; if they be uttered with a right spirit, they are not spoken in vain; they are not as water spilt upon the ground. But there was more in the blessing of the patriarchs, for therein they were in a peculiar manner directed by God, and their blessing was a kind of solemn enfeoffment, a disposing or conferring a right to the parties blessed.

[2.] The persons blessed—'Jacob and Esau.' Jacob is put first, as having obtained the precedency, though the younger son, by the peculiar direction of God in this matter.

[3.] The matter of the blessing—'Concerning things to come.' that is, the great things which should happen to his posterity. Which things were revealed to him, partly, by a general promise: Gen. xxvi. 24, 'I will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake;' partly, by a peculiar instinct at the time of blessing, wherein, according to the extraordinary dispensations of those times, the Lord had a special hand and direction. You see the scope and drift of the words. I shall take this method in the handling of them—(1.) I shall give brief observations upon the passages of this story of blessing Jacob and Esau so far as they relate to the text. (2.) Wherein the virtue and strength of Isaac's faith was manifested. (3.) What is to be learned out of the whole for our comfort and instruction.

First, For the observations upon the passages of the story, which is here alluded unto. You have the story in Genesis xxvii. In reading of it, you may observe these things—

1. I observe (and so the text intimates) that both were blessed; 'He blessed Jacob and Esau.' Esaus have their portion as well as Jacobs. Partly, as they are creatures: God will have all his creatures to taste somewhat of his goodness. Look, as Abraham gave the heritage to Isaac, but yet he gave gifts to the sons of the concubines, Gen. xxv. 5, 6. Or as Jehoshaphat gave to his 'sons silver and gold, precious things, and fenced cities in Judah; but the kingdom he gave to Jehoram,' 2 Chron. ii. 1-3. So though the Lord hath given himself to his people, and given them a portion among the sanctified, yet he will give gifts also to his creatures, they shall all taste of his goodness: Ps. xvii. 14, 'The men of this world have their portion in this life, whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures.' All God's creatures, as they are his creatures, taste of his common bounty; he provides for the young ravens, they have their food from him; much more men, that are made after his image. Partly he doth it, not only as they are his creatures, but many times as they descend from parents in covenant

with him. And thus you know Isaac had his blessing, and Ishmael had his blessing, both for Abraham's sake. As Isaac had the great blessings of the covenant, so Ishmael had temporal benefits. The children of the covenant, they that are born of parents in covenant with God, though they have not the blessing of Isaac, yet they have the blessing of Ishmael, many temporal mercies for their father's sake. And so here, Jacob had the blessing of Abraham, he had the special blessing; and Esau, because born of Isaac, he had a blessing too; they carry away the temporal part of the covenant with them. And partly, because many times they make some common profession of the name of God. God will be behind hand with no creature; so far as they are good, they shall see good. A wicked man hath his reward, he is no loser by what he doth for God. Ahab's humiliation, you know, had a courteous message, a reprieve of the judgment, 'It shall not come in thy days,' 1 Kings xxi. 29. And Esau, for his general profession, at least because he was in Isaac's family, therefore God makes provision for him, he hath his portion—'The dew of heaven from above, and the fatness of the earth,' Gen. xxvii. 39. As far as they work, they have their reward.

Use. Well then, learn from hence, that we can draw no argument of love or hatred from outward things. Many ungodly men may prosper in this world; they cannot say therefore that God loves them. Prisoners have an allowance till the time of their execution, so have carnal men; God in the bounty of his providence gives them a great many comforts and mercies in the present life. And many times their allowance is very plentiful; partly, to wean the godly from placing their happiness in these enjoyments. When men of God's hand, Ps. xvii. 14, that is, men of violence, have their bellies filled with hid treasure, this is a hint to the children of God that this is not the happiness they should expect. They that are not favourites of God are suffered to grow great and wealthy, to have riches and honours heaped upon them. God may give a large store of carnal comforts to wicked men, that we may say, Ps. cvi. 4, 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest untothy people;' that we may reason thus, What! shall we be contented with wicked men's mercies, that have not one drachm of grace, no interest in God's favour and peculiar love? Partly for the increase of their judgment, that conscience may gnaw more in the place of torments. The happiness that wicked men enjoy in this world is but matter for the worm that never dies to feed upon. When they are cast out among the devils and damned spirits, their consciences will tell them how good the Lord was to them while they lived in the world. and that it is by their own fault that they are come into that place of torment.

2. I observe again, that Jacob, the younger, had the precedency and principal blessing, and therefore he is named first. There are two parts of this observation—(1.) The younger brother is preferred; (2.) The quality of his blessing, that it was choice and principal blessing.

[1.] The younger brother was preferred. It is a course the Lord often took, even from the beginning of the world, to take the younger and leave the elder to perish in their own ways. Abel the younger, was preferred before Cain; the Lord accepted him to be a priest.

For that was the contest between them, when they made their offerings to the Lord, they were then appearing before the Lord; as Moses bid Korah and his accomplices take censers, and see whom the Lord would own; so Cain and Abel were appearing to see whom he would own as priest and prince of the family, that should continue the line of the church, and be accepted; and there Abel, the younger, is preferred before Cain, the elder. And afterwards Abraham, the younger, is taken to be God's favourite. And next there is Jacob's blessing, and by the direction of God he preferred Ephraim, the younger, before Manasseh, the elder son of Joseph. So Shem was preferred before Japheth; the Spirit of God takes notice of this, he is called 'the brother of Japheth, the elder,' Gen. x. 21. And afterwards David, who was the youngest, the ruddy youth, is chosen to be the man after God's own heart. What doth the Lord signify by such a dispensation as this? Some think that which is natural is first, and then that which is spiritual. Others, the preferment of the gentile, the younger brother in grace, before the Jew, the elder; and that many times it falls out, they that are first shall be last, and they which are last shall be first. But rather, hereby the Lord would manifest the freedom of his counsels. In election God hath no respect to age; and the order of nature and grace is not the same: Mal. i. 2, 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' Were they not in all points like? or if there was any preferment, it was on Esau's side; was he not the elder brother? 'Yet Jacob have I loved.' God would still write, as with a sunbeam in the course of his providence, the liberty of his counsel, and that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; a dispensation which we must admire and adore God for the wisdom of it, but not murmur against him. But then—

[2.] For the other part of the observation, namely, the quality of his blessing. If we look into the letter of the words, when Isaac comes to bless Jacob, you will find nothing but what is of a temporal concernment, and little differing from the blessing of Esau: Gen. xxvii. 28, therefore saith he, 'God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine;' this was Isaac's blessing. Now compare it with ver. 38, 39, when Esau came to him, 'Hast thou but one blessing, O my father? And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven from above.' When you compare these two blessings together there is little difference, only that Jacob should have the pre-eminence above Esau; therefore where lies the peculiarity of this blessing?

I answer, If there had been nothing spiritual in the promise, it would have been no comfort to Jacob at all, for the temporal blessings here mentioned did not concern his person, for he was to be tossed up and down, and pass through many hazards and uncertainties of his life—'Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,' as he gives an account to Pharaoh, Gen. xlvii. 9. And the bowing down of the nations concerned his posterity. And if this had been all his portion, it had been no such matter of envy to Esau, for Esau hated him, and had a purpose to kill him, Gen. xxii. 41, because he had got away 'the blessing,' the chief blessing, the peculiar blessing. Isaac's eyes were grown dim, hastening to the grave, and now he was about to dis-

pose of the great promises (for the blessing of the patriarchs was a kind of enfeoffment or investing of them in the right of the great promises; he was now to put Jacob into the possession of the great promises), that was his intent; and the very words Isaac useth do imply something spiritual. When he speaks of submission to his posterity, he chiefly intends the dominion and sovereignty of the Messiah—'Let the people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee,' ver. 29; that is, to the top branch that shall come and proceed from thee; and the bowing down of his brethren to him literally implies he should be the top branch of the family, and he should have the priestly dignity. And whereas it is added at the end of his blessing—'Cursed be he that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee;' it is part of God's blessing to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. And therefore we must understand Jacob's blessing according to the latitude of the blessing which was bestowed upon Abraham: Gen. xii. 3, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' That is, in him that shall proceed from thee in the Messiah. Therefore this is clearly intended, and is that which is in the bowels of it, that the Messiah should come from Jacob; and all that would not acknowledge him, a curse should be upon them. Nay, when the blessing is repeated by Isaac, for he blessed Jacob twice, first by mistake, afterward solemnly and purposely: Gen. xxviii. 4, 'God give the blessing of Abraham to thee, and to thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger.' What was that blessing of Abraham? To be the head of the blessed line of which the Messiah should come, to be the priest that should continue the worship of God and teach the laws of God, and to be in covenant with God—these were the great blessings. And there is added the possession of Canaan, where the Lord meant to record his name, and to continue and preserve his people. Well then, we see what was Jacob's blessing. Besides much temporal felicity, there are three special things I shall take notice of that were Jacob's privileges, and that appertain to Jacob's blessing: there was the being the father of the Messiah, the continuance of the priesthood, and so of the church, in his family, and the entering into covenant with God. Esau was rejected, and Jacob taken into covenant with God, and so the blessing of Abraham came upon him—'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.'

(1.) To be the father of the Messiah, to have relation to Christ, that is a great blessing. We have a relation to him now, not in blood, but in grace; that way is the kindred now reckoned, it is a spiritual kindred, when we are members of his body, and partake of his Spirit, and do his will: Mat. xii. 50, 'Whoever will do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' This is the top happiness, to have relation to Christ. As that was Jacob's peculiar blessing, to be the father of the Messiah; so our blessing lies in this, that we are children of the Messiah, begotten to be to him for a seed. Look, as those were rejected whose genealogy could not be cleared, Ezra ii. 62; so if you cannot make out your kindred and relation to Christ, you are those that will be put by and rejected of the Lord.

(2.) Herein lay also Jacob's blessing, to be in the church, and to have the church continued in his line. It is a great happiness to be in

the church, much more to have it continued in our race, to have a people born of us that shall worship God, and call upon the name of God. To be in the church, that is a very great blessing. Esau was left to run at large upon the mountains; but Jacob was to possess the land where God would record his name. Theodosius said, It is a greater privilege to be a member of a church than emperor of the world. The church is the ark of Noah, which is only preserved in the midst of floods and deep waters. The church is the land of Goshen, which only enjoys the benefit of light when there is nothing but darkness round about elsewhere. It is the fleece of Gideon, which is wet with the dews of heaven, and moistened with the influences of grace when all the ground round about us is dry. It is the house of Rahab, which alone escaped out of the ruins of Jericho. And then it is a great blessing to have the church continued in our line. It is very notable that Moses, when he doth come to Shem, he mentions him with this commendation: Gen. x. 21, 'These were born of Shem, the father of all the children of Eber;' that is, the father of the Hebrews which worship God and acknowledge God. This is his prerogative above all his brethren, above Japheth, and above Ham, his brethren, that he was the father of the children of Eber. Eber was not his immediate son, but one that was to come of his loins, of whom the people of God were to come. Shem was the father of many mighty nations: the father of the Syrians, Lydians, Persians, Armenians, the Elamites, all these came of Shem; but because these were ignorant of the true God, and did not worship the true God, therefore he doth not take his title from them, but is called 'the father of the children of Eber.' This was his great prerogative, that Abraham came from him, and all Israel, the people whom God had chosen to himself, among whom he would record his name, and in the midst of whom he would be worshipped while all the rest of the world lay in darkness. One would have thought Moses when he commended Shem would have commended him otherwise, and have taken notice of his long life. This is that Shem that lived 600 years, the last of the long-lived patriarchs; or this is that Shem that saw both worlds, before the flood and after; this was one of the heirs of Noah; this was one of the three great princes of the world; this was one that obtained Asia for his inheritance, the paradise of the earth; a land that was rich in jewels, gold, silver, spices of all kinds, fell to his lot and share. One would have thought Moses would have reckoned the mighty kings and princes which had descended from his loins, the great nations—Assyrians, Persians, &c. Nations that were famous for power, art, greatness of their empire and monarchy, all these came of Shem. No; Moses puts by all this; here is his commendation, Shem 'the father of the children of Eber,' of a contemptible nation, that was shut within the precincts of a little spot of land; but 'to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises,' Rom. ix. 4. This was the honour of Shem. Oh, then, how should we strive to continue religion in our families, that so we may be the fathers of the children of the covenant, the fathers of the race of those that owned and acknowledged God. This is a great honour, and God expects it from you: Gen. xviii. 19, 'I know Abraham, that

he will command his children and his household, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice.' This is that which God expects from you, that you should teach them the worship of the Lord, and charge them to worship the true God, that when you are dead and gone, there may be some of your line and race to call upon God.

(3.) Another privilege of Jacob above Esau was this, that he was taken into covenant with God—'The blessing of Abraham shall come upon thee.' What is that? 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed,' Gen. xvii. 7. Oh, this is the great happiness of a people, to have God for our God. This I have opened at large, ver. 16. So it is very notable, when Noah comes to pronounce blessings and curses upon his children in the spirit of prophecy: Gen. ix. 26, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Shem—' there lay Shem's happiness—'and Canaan shall be his servant.' When he comes to curse Ham he curses him in his person; but when he comes to speak of the blessings of Shem, he doth not bless him so much in person as in the God that was made over to him in covenant. That was happiness enough for Shem, to have God for his God, as he had Ham for his servant, so he had God for his master. This was the great promise which was so often repeated and made to the patriarchs, Gen. xvii. 7. There it was made to Abraham—'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Then it is repeated to Isaac: Gen. xxvi. 24, 'I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee;' and then to Jacob: Gen. xxviii. 13, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;' and in this Heb. xi. 9, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are called 'heirs of the promise.' What was the great privilege that Isaac had above Ishmael? or Jacob above Esau? They had God for their God, and were in covenant with God. And afterward the same promise is made to all Israel: Exod. xx. 2, 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' Hence that dialogue between God and the church: Hosea ii. 23, 'I will say, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.' To be a God to any is to supply them with all good things necessary for the temporal or spiritual life, to give them all things pertaining to this life, and to a better. To this life for temporal blessings: Gen. xxviii. 20, 21, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I shall go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.' You must not understand this place as if Jacob did capitulate, and indent with God upon these terms. If he should not give me raiment to put on, and food to eat, I will not own him to be God; but the meaning is, Then I shall know him to be a God to me;—for to be a God to any is to be a storehouse of all kind of good things that they stand in need of;—then I shall acknowledge him to be the only author of my life and estate.

And then for spiritual blessings. Illumination, and bending the heart to obedience: Jer. xxxi. 33, 'I will put my law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' So the spirit of regeneration is begged upon

this ground: Ps. cxiii. 40, 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God. Thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.' As if it were implied in the relation; if God undertake to be a God to us, it is to give us his Spirit, to write his law in the heart, and bend our mind to the obedience of his will. And then for the happiness of the other world, the resurrection of the body: Mat. xxii. 32, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' And the fulness of joy and comfort in the everlasting state: Rev. xxi. 2, 3, 'They shall be his people, and he will be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,' &c. All this is implied in God's being a God to us, that he will give us all blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

Use. Well then, do not admire Esau's portion, but Jacob's, and put in for a share of it, Ps. cxliv. 15. If you mark, there is a dialogue there between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh and carnal nature is taken with pomp, and bravery, and outward comforts; there the flesh speaks, admiring worldly excellences, where there is no complaining in the streets, &c.—'Oh, happy are the people that are in such a case.' Then the spirit speaks, and corrects the voice of the flesh—'Yea rather, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.' However I be dealt withal as to Esau's portion, let me have Jacob's portion, and be a member of Christ, in covenant with God.

3. I observe from the story: this difference of blessings between them was founded in an eternal decree and purpose of God, that was declared while the children were as yet struggling in the womb: Gen. xxv. 23, 'The Lord said, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger.' Here was a decree of God manifested before the children were born; the younger should have the pre-eminence, and go away with the chiefest blessing; and hence the apostle concludes election to be of mere grace, without any reason in the creature: Rom. ix. 11–13, 'For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.' The apostle accommodates it to the purpose of election and reprobation. Here is a notable instance of God's distinguishing grace, two brothers, two twins, and if any should have the preference the elder might seem to be the man; but God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts, when they were both alike in themselves, 'they had done neither good nor evil,' the Lord would show that his pleasure is the highest cause of difference between man and man. Why is the gospel hid from the wise and prudent? Why is it manifested to babes? Christ would give no other reason but this, 'Even so, O Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,' Mat. xi. 26. 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' All the good we have comes from the grace of God.

4. I observe again: as the difference of the blessings was founded on an eternal decree, so the decree is accomplished to Jacob, notwithstanding Isaac's reluctance and unwillingness, and that by Isaac's

mistake and Jacob's sin. Mark, the decree was accomplished notwithstanding the reluctancy and unwillingness of Isaac; Isaac's heart was much set upon Esau, being the eldest son, and he was the person that prepared him savoury meat: Gen. xxv. 18, 'And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison;' and therefore he would fain have put Esau into this privilege, and have settled the blessing upon him, that he might have the great privileges of primogeniture. But God's counsel stands, notwithstanding all lets and hindrances. Isaac had sent him off a message to try his obedience, and then intended to give him the blessing, Gen. xxvii. 3, 4; but God settles it upon the head of Jacob, and thus you see the counsel of the Lord stands; notwithstanding all lets and hindrances, God keeps on his course and pace. The Lord is compared to fire, in the prophet, that passeth through briars and thorns. Briars and thorns, do not quench the fire, but feed the flame and yield fuel to the fire which find its way through them. So briars and thorns, things that seem to be contrary, they do not hinder God's purposes, but rather make way for them. Joseph is sold that he might be worshipped; cast into the pit, or else he had never been set upon the throne. There is no let to the almighty; Isaac either forgetting the promise, or through carnal affection seeking to misplace the blessing, this makes way for Jacob's receiving it. And then it was accomplished, notwithstanding Isaac's mistake and Jacob's lie; he took Jacob for Esau when he felt his hands, and smelt his priestly perfumed garments which he received together with the birthright, which he bought of Esau. By the mistake of Isaac the blessing was settled upon the head of Jacob; but that which is casualty and mistake with us, is providence with God. Isaac stumbles upon the right object, and so unawares fulfils God's decrees. Thus the Lord overrules all things; things that we call chance do execute and bring his purpose to pass. So many have come to an ordinance and found a blessing; there is a special purpose of God in it. And Jacob gets it by a lie; so that you see that not only those things which we call mistakes, but also sins fall under the government of God's providence: Jacob sinned in seeking the blessing this way, and yet by that means it is accomplished and brought to pass. It is true, it was to Jacob's cost, for God afterwards paid him in his own coin; he that supplanted was supplanted; he that, being the younger son, came to his father, and said, I am thy first-born. he had Leah, the elder daughter, brought to him instead of Rachel, the younger. But though God's purpose may be brought to pass this way, yet the instruments that accomplish God's will are not without sin, because they act according to their own inclination; as the artificer makes the mill, but the water runs of its own accord. Though the Lord makes use of the evil of our actions, yet because we follow our own inclination, which is corrupt, therefore we are guilty.

5. Again, I observe: as to the rejection of Esau, it is notable, for the clearing of God's justice, Esau was not rejected from the principal blessing till he had first rejected it himself. Whatever God had purposed within his own heart, Esau was not actually rejected till he had rejected the blessing. The primogeniture was not only assigned by God to Jacob, but despised by Esau, Gen. xxv. 34, he sold it for

a mess of pottage. The birthright had the priesthood and promises annexed to it, and having sold the birthright, he had no right to the blessing. Therefore he is called 'a profane person,' because he sold his birthright; and he goes and seeks affinity with idolators, and marries into the stock of the cursed Canaanites, and therefore he is called a fornicator: Heb. xii. 16, 'Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.' He degenerates and falls off from God, therefore no wonder God cut him off; that he grew wild, though he were a branch of a good stock. He having sold the birthright, had no right to the privileges of it, therefore he is justly deprived of them. Thus wicked men fit themselves for destruction, whatever God's counsels are in himself. The vessels of mercy are not only determined, but prepared and fitted by God for glory: but he endures with much long-suffering vessels of wrath, till they fit themselves for destruction; so they are compassed about with a fire of their own kindling.

6. I observe again: Jacob receives this blessing in the perfumed garment which belonged to the first-born, and particularly the garment wherein Esau as priest ministered, and which was sold to him with the birthright. The first-born, who was to perform the priest's office, was herein a type of Christ, who is *primogenitus et unigenitus*, the first-born and only-begotten son of God. We put on Christ, and the garment of his righteousness, and so we are blessed of the Lord.

7. I observe again: the blessing being pronounced, Isaac would not retract it when he was sensible of the mistake: Gen. xxvii. 33, 'I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed.' And though Esau sought it with tears, and would fain have the thing reversed again, yet he could not have it. 'The gifts and calling of God,' and his special blessings, 'are without repentance,' Rom. xi. 29. 'He found no place for repentance,' Heb. xii. 17; that is, for changing the mind of Isaac. The Lord doth not change his mind, but continues the blessings where they are settled.

Secondly, Wherein lay the strength of Isaac's faith? For it is said, 'By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.'

1. In that he doth with confidence pronounce a blessing concerning things to come, and doth dispose of Canaan as if he had the peaceable possession of it, and could dispose of it at pleasure. He that will consider Isaac's case with an eye of sense would wonder at his confidence, that he that had not a foot of land in Canaan, and had no right to anything there but a burying-place, and that was now exiled by a famine, and lived a sojourner in the land of Gerar, that he should pronounce those magnificent words and speeches: Gen. xxvii. 29, 'Let people serve thee, and let nations bow down to thee, and be thou lord over thy brethren.' To a man that looks upon the outward case of Isaac, all this would seem to be ridiculous pageantry. Could he confer dominions that was scarce free himself, but tossed up and down? Yet by faith he speaks as confidently of future blessings, as if he saw them fulfilled. So should we be as certain of the blessings to come that God hath promised, as if they were present, though we see no likelihood of them. The word of God should be assurance enough, though

we have nothing of sense to bear us up. Do but observe two things before these blessings could be accomplished—(1.) The promise was to suffer a long delay; (2.) As to sense, it was often contradicted; yet ‘by faith he blessed them.’

[1.] The promise was delayed for a long time. Esau had his blessing sooner than Jacob; a fat soil, and power and force to maintain his lot, Gen. xxxvi. Esau multiplied into many and great families, he presently grew great and mighty; there came dukes and captains from him: ver. 15, ‘duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho,’ &c.; whereas Jacob was but a servant in the house of Laban till he was a hundred years old, labouring for his living; and it was three hundred years ere a people proceeded from him that were numerous and powerful, as the stars of heaven, as the Lord had said. Nay it was not fully accomplished till David’s time; Saul began when he smote the Amalekites, 1 Sam. xv. 3, and David says, Ps. lx. 8, ‘Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.’ So Ishmael grows presently great; twelve princes came of him, Gen. xxv. 16; whereas Isaac continued in a private and low estate. Thus will God try the faith of his people in things to come, when it is a long time ere the blessing be obtained that is promised to them.

[2.] This promise and this blessing seemed to be contradicted as to sense. Jacob’s blessing runs thus, ‘Be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee,’ Gen. xxvii. 29, and yet Jacob was fain to bow and cringe to Esau, Gen. xxxiii. 3. The promise seems to be contradicted by the providence of God. So Gen. ix. 26, ‘Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.’ Ay, but before Ham was Shem’s servant, that is, the servant of the posterity of Shem, viz., before the Canaanite was subdued by the Israelites, they were subject to Ham’s posterity, Ham bore rule over Shem; for the father of the Egyptians was the son of Ham, and they were in vile subjection in Egypt, and ran many hazards. For a great while the promise seemed to be contradicted, and quite lost, yet they could speak of them as confidently as if they were at hand. Well then, go you and do likewise, get a patient faith, get an obstinate faith.

(1.) Get a patient faith that will tarry the Lord’s leisure though he delays his coming. The good things which faith expects are things to come; you shall have them in due time. Would you have the meat before it be roasted? and mercies before they are ready for you? Get a waiting faith, to depend upon the Lord in the midst of all delays. When your portion is fitted and prepared for you, then you shall have it.

(2.) Get an obstinate faith that will depend upon God in the face of contradictions; when the Lord seems to march against us, to believe his heart is with us. When Ham domineers, then to believe God is making way for his subjection to Shem; and when Esau lords it, then to think God will bring him down, and he shall stoop to Jacob. As he in the story which held the boat with his right hand, and that being cut off, he takes hold with his left hand, and when that is cut off he fastens on it with his teeth; so when one help is cut off, and then another, yet faith doth fasten upon God as long as it hath his word to fasten on; when God makes breach after breach, then to depend upon

him. And as the blind man that was rebuked, yet he cried the more ; so to follow after God the more you are rebuked, this is a faith indeed.

Herein was Isaac's faith seen in a confident believing of things to come, though he passed through many hazards, and his present condition were mean, and those that were rejected grew great and prince-like in the world.

2. His faith was seen herein, that as soon as he seeth God's hand, against his own natural affection he yields and submits to the Lord. He would fain have settled the blessing upon Esau's head, but God's providence ordered it otherwise, and he would not retract the blessing — 'Jacob is blessed, and he shall be blessed ;' nay he confirms it again : Gen. xxviii. 3, 4, 'The Lord give the blessing of Abraham to thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Wherein he doth knowingly and purposely, and more explicitly, give the blessing to him, though before he did it by mistake. It is a good work of faith to make the soul to yield to God's will against our own inclinations, or the persuasions of our own reason, and the bent of our heart. Faith knoweth that God is so great, powerful, and glorious, that his will must be obeyed.

Thirdly, I shall give you some lessons from hence, from Isaac's blessing Jacob and Esau.

1. We are to seek blessings for our children. Though we cannot bless as prophets, yet we should bless as parents. What must we do to leave them a blessing? Found a covenant interest for them in your own persons, this is a way to leave a blessing behind you. All God's blessings run sweetly in the channel of the covenant, therefore do not cut off the right of your children : Gen. xvii. 7, 'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed.' First to thee, and then to thy seed. And then lay up prayers for them, as Job, who offered sacrifice for his children day by day, according to their number. By head and poll he seeks to God for a blessing : Prov. xxxi. 2. Bathsheba calls Solomon the son of her vows. With her prayers she mingled vows, so make your children the children of your vows ; as it was said to Austin's mother, *Filius tot precum et lachrymarum perire non potest*—a child of so many prayers and tears cannot miscarry. And then lay up promises for them. Believe for them too. The faith of a parent doth good to the child ; hereby you remove obstructions, and mercies run out more freely to them. Though the parent's faith be not a principal cause, yet it is an occasional means to stave off destruction from, and to further the salvation of his children : Heb. xi. 23, 'By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents.' The faith of Moses' parents preserved him in the water when a babe ; the sprinkling of the door-posts preserved the first-born, it was a fruit of the parents' faith. Noah's house was saved by faith, Heb. xi. 7. Faith doth not only look for personal mercies, but for family mercies ; you have God's word for your children as Isaac had, he left his children the blessings of God's word. Therefore believe for them. And then 'bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' Eph. vi. 4. Let them know God from our mouths, that they may have the awe of God upon them. Acquaint your children with, and urge God's mind to them, as they are capable of instruction. You are not worthy of the name of

fathers till you do this. You dispersed the old Adam; now if you had conveyed the stone, or some hereditary disease to them, surely you would seek a remedy for them, or direct them to one if you could tell them of one. Oh! begin with them betimes. Timothy 'from a child had known the holy scriptures,' 2 Tim. iii. 15.

2. Observe again: faith believeth God's truth, however revealed, ordinarily or extraordinarily. Those that had extraordinary revelation, yet they had a need of faith. It is not said by the light of prophecy, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, but by faith. Though much of God's will was made known to him by an extraordinary way of revelation, yet he needs faith still. And you that have the promises of God's word have as much to depend upon as they that had oracles from heaven, and as good ground to trust him. They are commended for the strength of their faith in depending upon God, and you have the word of God to show for it; promises to bear you up, to support you, and carry you forth; that is ground enough for faith.

3. You may learn how the Lord convives at the infirmities of his children where the heart is sound. Isaac blessed Jacob by error, yet he blessed him by faith. Isaac purposed to bless Esau with the special blessing, either forgetting the promises (for some divines excuse him so), or misinterpreting the promise—'The elder shall serve the younger,' thinking it concerned only his posterity, not the person of Esau, God, no further enlightening his mind, that his counsel and wisdom might the more be seen; or out of inadvertency, not regarding the promise. But his heart was upright, and as soon as he seeth God in it, he persisteth not in his error; he will not reverse the blessing, though Esau sought it with tears. And now the Lord winks at his infirmity, and saith, 'By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau.' Where we do not sin voluntarily and wilfully, but only out of error, incogitancy, or weakness, and the heart is upright with God, the Lord will pardon our infirmities, he will put a finger upon the scar. Here is nothing said of Isaac's infirmity or weakness, but only his faith is mentioned.

Use. Take heed of losing this privilege of having the covenant blessings continued in your line. To this end—

1. Take heed of cutting off yourselves from the communion of the church. All along, as the branches of the covenant began to grow wild, God still cut them off. Cain came of Adam in covenant with God, but Cain was cut off because of his contempt of the privilege, and disobedience: Gen. iv. 16, 'He went out from the presence of the Lord.' What is the meaning of that? Surely there is no going from the face of the Lord in one sense, from his all-seeing eye: Ps. cxxxix. 7, 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?' But he went out from the communion of the church; God having rejected him, and therefore the posterity of Cain are called sons and daughters of men; but the posterity of Seth, in whom the line of the church was continued, are called the sons of God: Gen. vi. 2, 'The sons of God saw the daughters of men, and took them wives of all which they chose;' that is, those that were of Seth's line, which was the church line, matched into the stock of cursed Cain, who was cursed because he was cut off for his disobedience and contempt of God, therefore they are called 'the daughters of men.' Again, Ishmael was

born of Abraham, but now Ishmael was cut off for malignity and enmity at the power of godliness; for mocking and scoffing at Isaac, which the apostle interprets to be a persecution of those that are born after the Spirit: Gal. iv. 29, 'As then, he that was born after the Spirit persecuted him that was born after the flesh,' meaning Ishmael and Isaac, 'so it is now;' therefore he was cut off. Again, Esau in the text, he is cut off. Why? For profaneness, Heb. xii. 15, 16; therefore he lost his covenant privilege, because of his profaneness in slighting of it. And afterwards the Jews, they were cut off; though they were the natural branches, they grew upon a covenant root, yet they were 'cut off because of unbelief,' Rom. xi. 20. God bore with them after the shedding of the blood of Christ; though they murdered the Lord of life, yet they continued, and their covenant privileges continued to them; but when once they contemned the everlasting doctrine of the gospel that was brought to them, and first offered to them, but they rejected it, then they were cast out of the covenant state. Therefore take heed lest for any of these things the Lord should break you off from this great privilege of a covenant state.

2. Do not cut off your children by a contempt or neglect of baptism. Parents are guilty of more sin than they are aware of in depriving their children of this privilege; it is a wrong to God, a wrong to their children, a wrong to the church, a wrong to themselves, and it gratifies none but the devil. It is a great wrong to God, for we veil the glory of his preventing grace. It is the grace of God that he began to us in this external way; he chose us to be a portion to himself, and took us to be a seed to himself, before we knew or sought after him; and we rob him of his portion. God challengeth an interest in the children that were born of covenanted parents: Ezek. xvi. 20, 21, 'Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters whom thou hast born to me, and these thou hast sacrificed. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain my children?' God takes our children to be his children, he hath an interest in them. As he is a God to us and our seed, so we and our seed are to be his people. And then it is a wrong to your children; partly, in that you begrudge God's bounty to them. God hath bestowed a privilege upon them, and you rob them of this privilege. And partly, in not engaging them in their infancy, but leaving them at large. The people of God have many times blessed God that they came under this obligation by baptism in infancy, before they had liberty to choose their own way. Sure it will be brought as an aggravation at the day of judgment against all those that have not walked answerable to their baptismal vow. Then you rob the church of a great part of their members, of the children of the kingdom, Mat. viii. 12, of the most innocent part of the church, those that dishonour God least; but chiefly in this respect you do as much as in you lies seek to cut off the succession of churches, and their continuance. It is a mighty comfort to the people of God that they see a stock of little ones that are in covenant with God: Ps. cii. 28, 'The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.' And then you wrong yourselves. God hath put this honour upon his saints, that 'their children are holy,' 1 Cor. vii. 14. Whatever his secret counsel be (for there God will take a liberty),

they are under the visible, ordinary administration of the covenant of grace, which is entailed upon them. You know Abraham fell upon his face when God came to tender him this privilege: Gen. xvii. 3, 7, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.' The people of God have thankfully taken hold of such a privilege and mercy as this is. And so David: 2 Sam. vii. 19, 'And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, for thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come.' And you gratify none but the devil, who ever hath had a spite at the holy seed. As Amalek smote Israel in the rear, where there were little ones, so the devil would fain crush Christ's kingdom in the egg. At first, when God accepted Abel's sacrifice, and fire came down from heaven, then Abel was chosen to be the holy seed, and the devil stirs up Cain to murder him, that in Abel he might destroy all the race of the church. After, when they were multiplied, still he seeks either to corrupt them when they are grown, or cause their parents to cut them off from God, and to dedicate them to Moloch.

3. Strive to keep up religion in your families by the education of your children. It is an excellent thing to see religion preserved, to run downward from father to son, and have those born of our loins that may worship and serve the Lord. I remember it is spoken of Abraham, Heb. xi. 9, that 'he dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.' This is sweet, when father, and son, and grandson are all heirs of the same promise. Pliny reports, it was counted a great honour and height of felicity, that in one family of the Fabii there were three presidents of the senate one after another, and in one house of Curio's were three excellent orators one after another; but what honour is this when there is a constant succession of the power of godliness from father to son, and from son to grandchild! In the third descent you count men gentlemen of a new and opulent family. Here is Jacob the grandson of Abraham. This is true nobility, to have a holy kindred; there is no gentility like to this. It is a high honour to be father of such a race. Whereas otherwise *omnis sanguis concolor*, all blood is of a colour. Take care then that this succession be not cut off. Great persons are careful to entail their lands and estates upon their children, but for religion they are not careful for them. It is much better to be heir of our father's faith and religion than to be heir of our father's lands and demesnes. It is a high honour when we can say, My God, my father's God, and my grandfather's God, 2 Tim. i. 5. My father, my grandfather, and my great grandfather feared the Lord: Prov. xxvii. 10, 'Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not.' When we can look upon the God of our progenitors, surely then we must not forsake our father's God. Therefore let not your blood be stained in this kind, but teach your children, that this honour may be kept up in your line and family. None stain their blood so much as they that forsake the faith. Treasons and misdemeanours are a stain to noble ancestors; so is also apostasy, and loss of church privileges.
