

Reprobation - Jacob and Esau

By John Calvin

Ge 25:12 Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:

13 And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

14 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,

15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

16 These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations.

17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.

18 And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

19 And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac:

20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

WE HAVE HERE TO CONSIDER the difference that Moyses putteth betwixt the Children of Abraham. We have seen already that the whole stock which he had by Keturah, dwelled in a country far off. Concerning Ismael he is separated far enough from the land of Canaan: notwithstanding he be yet as one rejected. For it was necessary that the inheritance which was ordained to Isaack, should remain to him. Now in the first place it is said, that Ismael had twelve sons, the which in such sort multiplied, that of them came twelve Peoples. In this we see that God not without cause said to his servant Abraham (Genesis 17:20-22), that for his sake Ismael also should have a certain blessing: but that it should be transitory and fleeting, and the principal should remain to Isaack. But whatsoever it be:

yet so it is, that God did show himself faithful and true in his promise, the which belongeth to this temporal life. If God would that his truth and constancy should be known in these things of the world, which slip away, and have nothing else but a figure which vanisheth, as Saint Paul saith: what shall it be, when the promises are of far greater importance, as when he calleth us to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven? Think we then that we can be frustrate of that, staying ourselves upon him? See then how we must make our profit of this place. If God will be known firm and faithful in his word towards those which are as strangers, and which he hath shut out and rejected from his church: what will he then do towards us which are his children, whom he hath adopted, and to whom it hath pleased him to show himself nigh? For if God in small things, as in the stock, and in all other things of like sort, will have his truth known? what shall it be, when in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, he setteth out unto us the inheritance of heaven, and declareth unto us that he will be merciful unto us, and that he will pardon our faults, that we may be reconciled to him, and that by this means we may be the brethren and companions of Angels, under one head, to wit, our Lord Jesus Christ? Can God there fail in his promises? Shall they be void and without effect and execution? It is impossible. This then is that we have to hold in this first place. And further we have next to note, that God will manifest himself not only to us in these his benefits, which are most great and excellent, but also those that concern this life: and that there is nothing so small, in which he will not have some marks of his fatherly goodness imprinted. And forasmuch as he hath said that he will have care to feed us, let us wait upon him, for all that which belongeth to the maintenance of this life, and let us not think that it derogateth any whit from his majesty, in that he will have us to call upon him for drink and for food to feed upon. For he will that in all and through all we should have our recourse to him: let us not then doubt but that God (albeit our bodies be earth and ashes, rottenness and worms meat, and as the common speech is, but carrions [*dead and putrefying flesh*], which are nothing worth) will yet notwithstanding provide for all our corporal necessities. This is that we have to add as the second point. But now we must here see the comparison, which Moyses maketh betwixt Ismael and Isaack. Behold Ismael which is cut off, and is no more reputed among the children of God, and yet notwithstanding we see that he prospereth, and that he hath a great train. For of twelve sons which he hath begotten, behold twelve peoples that came from them. And with all of Isaack, what? Isaack married at forty years old: and after that his wife was barren, and that not for one year, nor for two, but even for

twenty years space, he had no children. God had said unto him: *I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea.* This was pronounced to his father Abraham: but this was of special favor toward him. But he might have been before this time increased, as he hoped, notwithstanding he saw that his wife was barren, and it seemed as though god minded to mock him, and declare unto him that the thing which he hoped for, was nothing worth. When therefore he saw that his brother Ismael, who had no root in the church, who was a stranger from all hope of salvation: when he saw him (I say) to flourish in his seed, and it seemed that God had poured forth all his graces upon him: and in the meantime, that he was left in his own house all alone, and had none to succeed him: it is certain that he might be in great perplexity, as if it had been much better for him to have been like his brother Ismael.

This was to make him give over all, and after to be without hope, and to have contemned God: he had falne [*fallen*] even to the uttermost extremity, if he had not been holden in by a singular patience. Now then, we have here to behold as in a glass, the condition of God's Church, how it beginneth, and how God upholdeth it, and multiplieth it, that is to say, after so strange a fashion, that it seemeth at all assays, that that same appearance which God shall have given us, is nothing (as a man would say) but to deceive us. For (instead that the children of this world have a goodly show, and a man shall find them to increase to the eye) the church shall be hidden under the Earth: a man shall see the earth full replenished by unbelievers, of contemners of God and profane people: and where shall a man find the faithful? They shall be very thin sown and a man shall not be able to perceive them, they shall be despised, men shall tread them almost under their feet, and men shall think that God hath no care of his Church, and that further he taketh pleasure that the wicked should make their triumphs, and should have their brave and pompous shows.

Now then this is showed unto us in the persons of Isaack and of Ismael, to the end that the strangeness of it troubles us not beyond measure, and that we should fight constantly against all doubtings which might arise in our imagination, as often as we do see a small number of people which worship God, and that we see almost an infinite number of those which stubbornly set themselves against him, and which know not what it meaneth to bear his yoke. Now this doctrine is very necessary for us at this day. For how doth God work in our time? For when he meant to rear up against his Gospel, at what end began he? What people called he? And yet now, if we cast our eye upon the whole world, we shall find in the first place, that in Asia (which is the greatest part thereof) all is disordered and

confused, and that there, there is nothing but superstitions on the one side, and so unruly barbarousness on the other, as pity it is to behold. Mark also the other part of the world, to wit, Africa, which is in the same order. And as concerning Europe (which men call Christendom) let a man behold that which is in Italy, in France, and other places, and a man shall find that the Devil beareth there the sway, and that the upholders of Antichrist, who are deadly enemies of the Church, what profession soever they make, a man shall see them to be as the Stars of Heaven, and as the sand of the sea: so as a man might say that there is nothing but for their use. And indeed they are very skillful to make their vaunt thereof: for they make a buckler of this to contemn God, and also to harden themselves in their rebellion. They mock and deride us for this, that we are so few people, and that notwithstanding we will be holden for the Church. But for our part we are despised and rejected: and moreover, we are far off from approaching to this great people, which advance themselves against us: To be short, a man would say, that we are as three grains of Corn under a great heap of Chaff. And yet for all this it is so, that we have this testimony of God, that he keepeth us and avoweth us to be his household servants. For it is no Church, unless it be joined to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head thereof. When this faileth, all the rest goeth to wrack and to ruin, as Saint Paul saith: *Now we are united to the son of God, through the faith of his Gospel*, which is the certain and undeceiveable bond. And how shall we judge that we are the Church, seeing that we are nothing in comparison of the unfaithful, who are puffed up by reason of their greatness, and of all their other qualities, which they know well enough how to set out with full mouth? But let not us be astonished for all this, seeing that God hath given us an allowance in the person of our father Isaack, that the Church was as a forsaken house, and that he had no stock and that he had not a great number of people, and yet for all that he ceased not to hold it as an hidden treasure: let us content ourselves herewith. And now for that which followeth, the person of Ismael ought also to be well marked: for he came out from the house of Abraham, which at that time was the only Church in the whole world: he bare also circumcision, as if he had been an inheritor of the kingdom of God: yea he was the firstborn, and had the swinge [*sway, influence, authority*] in the house, yea, insomuch that he mocked his brother, as we have seen already. Now it is even so likewise at this day concerning the Papists: for they are not strangers from the church, but they are as bastard children. They will say also that they have antiquity on their side, and they went before us: and we see how they trust in their succession which they have from the Apostles (as they say:) that at all

times there have been Bishops and prelates in their church, and that hereupon a man might certainly conclude, that the title of the church belongeth to them. And yet for all this they are but bastards as Ismael was, forasmuch as they were not begotten by the gospel as we have heard, which is the seed of freedom: but have corrupted themselves. Behold, how we may account them for Ismaelites. For albeit they be great peoples, and that we in the meantime remain as poor untimely fruits, yet let us know that our Lord Jesus Christ hath given us such an example thereof, that at this day we might not be ashamed. This then to be short, is that we have here to remember. And hereunto we ought also to apply that which we read in the prophets. For it is not for once that this happened, that the Church hath been brought to a small number, yea and that it had nothing but horrible desolation in it: as in the time of the captivity of Babylon, what was it? For thereupon it is said: by Esay,

Rejoice O barren that didst not bear: break forth into joy and rejoice, thou that didst not travail with Child: For the desolate hath more Children than all the married wives: Albeit thou hast been as a widow, God shall multiply thee, and thou shalt be a people, as it were by miracle, and above the judgment and opinion of men, and when thou shalt have stretched out thy Pavilions here and there, all shall be filled and replenished. (Isaiah 54:1)

When therefore we hear that this is spoken to the Church, let us know that if God at this day to humble us or to punish our offenses, do diminish the number of them that call upon him: we must not therefore quail, but rather follow always our vocation without any astonishment at all. And further let us note that we see (specially in the state of the church) that which is spoken of in the hundred and thirteenth Psalm: (Psalm 113:9) That God filleth the houses of those that were barren before, with goodly children and a great offspring. Let us wait then till our Lord doth his work, and then we shall have occasion to glorify him, knowing that it is not in vain that he hath said: that Abraham's seed shall be multiplied: but that this must come after such a sort as is incomprehensible unto us, and that the beginnings are small, and as it were nothing. When then we shall have this patience, it is certain that God will work in such sort, as we shall have always whereby to be confirmed in his promises, seeing that the effect shall show itself, yea and more than we could have thought or wished for. Furthermore this we have to mark here in this place. But there is another difficulty: to wit, that although Ismael be so advanced, that he seeth so many successors as is wonderful, (for he lived an hundred, thirty and seven years, and had twelve sons) and might see a people already

descended of his stock. Although for a time he were so lifted up, yet within a while after he was as one taken away: For Moyses indeed rehearseth those children he had, but when he speaketh thereof in the holy history, they are rejected and have no fellowship with that true stock of Abraham which was blessed: even so let us note that it is nothing to have like authority, and to have a great show, and goodly hue among men, and to be in reputation, namely so as men wonder at us, yet all this is worth nothing in comparison of the durable state of the Church.

God setteth up his house in such force, that it seemeth as a play of little Children: notwithstanding the foundations are perpetual. And further he continueth his grace, in such sort, that a man may very well see, that it is he which is the founder of his Church, which buildeth, finisheth, and upholdeth it. This plainly appeareth: yet the unbelievers have their discourses and determinations: in such sort, that they are as the grass which groweth upon the house tops, like as it is said in the hundred and twenty-ninth Psalm: (Psalm 129:6) The corn shall be trodden under feet, and men cast it into the earth, and it remaineth there in a low place, and in the meanwhile, behold the grass which shall grow very high upon the house tops: but inasmuch as it is nearer to the Sun it taketh no root: so that it must needs wither, in such sort that there cometh no fruit of it, as the Prophet there showeth. Even so then, when we see that the Lord keepeth us in this poor and low condition, and that not only we are despised, but as it were utterly rejected of all: let us know, that it ought to suffice us, that we have a root in our God, to live by his grace forever: that we are maintained by him; and that we are as a tree planted by the river's side, which always shall be moistened with water to draw out nourishment therefrom. Let us content ourselves herewith. And so this comparison is not made without cause, when Moyses expressly saith that Ismael begat twelve sons, which were gathered into twelve peoples, and after that, he stays there, and so leaves them. Further he saith: *Behold the generations of Isaack.*

And why? it is for that his wife was barren, until that he was come to the age of sixty years. Behold a wonderful thing, yea but we shall find, that after God had ratified his promise, to wit, that he should be multiplied in such sort, as he had showed unto him, that he had not spoken in vain. For what was it to see such a multitude of people in Egypt, as if grass had grown in the midst of an hot burning Oven? For this was as a furnace, (as the scripture speaketh) which was the tyranny and bondage of Egypt. Behold the people as chaff, and see the fire which is kindled in every place all about, and yet for all this the people is not consumed, like as is showed

in the figure of the Bush, which was as it were burning on a light fire, and yet the bush remained whole and was not consumed. (Exodus 3:2-4 & Acts 7:30) We see likewise how the people multiplied, being under such oppression and anguish, that then was not only question of an hundred thousand, or of three or four hundred thousand, but behold six hundred thousand issuing out under such a captivity. And how was this possible? Behold a miracle to ravish us in astonishment. Now then let us know, that as God after this manner tried the faith and patience of Isaack, so in the end he found a means to accomplish his promise, yea beyond the reach of man. For this came to pass after a strange fashion, and which a man would not have thought. Let us also at this day apply this to ourselves, and let us practice that which is spoken in the thirty-seventh Psalm. (Psalm 37:10) If we see the wicked and the contemners of God to be advanced as the Cedars of Lebanon, let us wait: for there needs no more, but even to turn our eyes, and lo, they are razed [*erased*] and cut off, and one shall not see so much as the place where they were. And why so? Because they were not planted in God. We hear that which our Lord Jesus Christ saith,

Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted shall be rooted up. (Matthew 15:13)

So let us not envy the Children of this world, when we shall see them in high estate, when we shall see them advance to nobility and to dignity, and in all other things: let us wait patiently and bear our condition peaceably: and if the world do mock us, make no account of us, and disdain us, let it suffice us notwithstanding to be esteemed before God and his Angels. And in the meantime let us wait, till God accomplish that he hath spoken in another place,

The righteous shall flourish like a Palm tree, and shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon: (Psalm 92:12, 13)

yea, after another fashion: for he saith, he shall be multiplied in the courts of the house of the Lord. When it is said, that they shall be planted in the house of God, that is to say, they shall be blessed of him: For, behold also wherein our continual felicity consisteth, so as from age to age, we may always stand fast, as it is said in the hundred and twelfth Psalm.

(Psalm 112) That inasmuch as God abideth forever one, and changeth not as doth the world which waxeth old and groweth in corruption: but that God is always like himself: The Prophet thereupon concludeth, that the faithful shall have their abiding: and that albeit at the first blush a man see not that the grace of God is showed upon them, yet in the end, it shall be known.

This therefore hitherto is that we have to learn of this place, and of this difference which Moyses putteth here between the stock of Ismael, and that of Isaack. Behold these beginnings of the church which are as a thing of nothing, but the finishing thereof is wonderful. Now the beginnings of the children of this world are mighty and noble, and such as astonish all men: but all comes to nothing. And why so? Because they have no continuing in the promise of God. This is the fountain of life: and behold how we may continue to the end: this also is the means to make us to be advanced above the world. For when the question is, of our rejoicing in God, and of contenting ourselves with his fatherly goodness, that he hath showed unto us, Let us not be as fools to busy ourselves about that which we now see with the eye: For these present things of the world pass away and vanish: but let us behold that which is invisible, as the true nature of Faith is, as the Apostle saith. Now Moyses addeth,

That Ismael dwelt over against his brethren, or in their presence.

It is true that one hath translated this *to dwell*, and the word importeth *to fall*: but it signifieth to rest, to dwell, and to have a house. This then is the true and natural meaning, that Ismael was not far off (as already we have seen) from the children of Keturah, but that he remained a near neighbor of the land of Canaan, which was promised to Isaack: notwithstanding this is true also, that he possessed not that land there, for it was meet that he should be barred from thence. And who is it that had driven him thence? For after the death of Abraham, it is certain, that he might have tarried there if he would. Isaack had nothing but the Sepulcher which his father had gotten: he was not lead thence to have any great and large possessions: he had nothing, unless it were altogether borrowed and by the leave of the inhabitants.

Ismael therefore might well have made his abode and nested there, if he had listed [*desired*]. But he went from thence: was this to obey GOD? No, For he was full of pride and rebellion. So he would rather have blasphemed God, when he had thought I am here put apart, as though I were not of my father's house. Therefore I must stay myself in the country where I was born. But God doth lead him thither without his knowledge, wherefore he goeth thither, yea by a secret inspiration. See how God worketh towards the unbelievers: he turneth them, he windeth them from one side to another.

We do not see apparently that it is so: but we must by faith consider therein a providence of GOD, and if we were very attentive therein, it is certain that we should have proof of that which is here written and that daily. For how is it that we are not destroyed of these mad beasts, which

compass us on every side? We see what their cruelty is, and how insatiable they are in their covetousness: Whereupon then stayeth it, that we are not all swallowed up: but that God turneth away their fury, and that he knoweth how to direct them as seemeth good unto him? he will make them sometimes to push one another: further he keepeth them there as Lions that are enchained and holden within Iron bars. See then how God also at this day driveth and chaseth the unbelievers, where he will without violence at least, so as they perceive it not, even as he did that at time with Ismael. For we have already declared, that he desired nothing more then to overthrow and abolish the promise of God, which was made unto Isaack, and yet for all that he goeth not about it. And why so? Because it was not permitted unto him from above, and because God doth place him there in a dwelling out of the way, saying, *Thou shalt dwell near thy brethren*: but howsoever it be, thou shalt not hinder, but that they shall enjoy the region which I have assigned unto them for an inheritance. But he speaketh specially of Brethren, and yet for all that he had none but Isaack: this is to show that God had no regard to one or to two, when he so shut up Ismael: but as if the people had already inhabited the land of Canaan: the people I say, which was not yet born, yea, which was not born a long time after. This is the sum of that we have further to note here. Now hereupon we may be confirmed and strengthened, as often as we see the wicked and condemners of God (who are so deadly enemies to us) to cast out their froth, in that we know that our Lord can stay and hold them in well enough, and that he will turn them some other way, and when it shall seem that they are to cast and banish us out of the world that our Lord will hold them as Captives, albeit they know not how. To be short, this that is here set out of Ismael, we shall have trial of, so that we be patient, and call upon God, and nothing doubt, but that he hath means of his own in himself to save us, the which we at the first perceive not. But now let us come to that which Moyses reciteth concerning Isaack. It is true that thereof he had already spoken something, but it is requisite that it be deducted more at large. He hath said, *That Isaack was forty years old, when he took Rebecca to wife*, and further that she was barren. Now it is like that Ismael was married sooner. For we have already seen that Hagar his mother had given him wife, without mention of his age, and a man may well gather that he was then very young. Isaack cometh to the age of forty years and might already be enfeebled before he entered into marriage. See then how he was kept back. Now let us note that all this while passed not, but he often entered into reckoning, to inquire of this promise, which was made unto him, that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of Heaven

and the sand of the sea, and all this while he found no wife, for he durst not take one in the country. And it is like that God showed him that he would keep her barren even till the end. But yet when he was married, it seemeth that then at the least God would bless him, and increase and augment him in his stock. But his wife is barren, yea by the space of twenty years. If any such temptation should come unto any of us, it is certain that the best of us should hardly resist it one day: we lightly pass over that which is here recited by Moyses. And why so? It is because we be not exercised with many conflicts, yea and because we shun them, and also God spareth us by reason of infirmity and rudeness. Nevertheless we ought to make our profit of such examples, when we come to any entry or trial of our faith, we are altogether undone. And why? Because in time and place we are not so fenced as were necessary. Now it is said here, that for the space of twenty years it seemed that Isaack was accursed of God, and that he was in a manner a dead stock, and that he had no hope of having any children during the space of twenty years. For here is not question of having children only. As when men and women do marry, they will be glad to have children: And this is also a token of God's favor, but here was a special reason in Isaack. For he waited not only for the people that should descend of him, but he waited for the salvation of the world. See then Jesus Christ, which is after a sort in his reins, as the Apostle saith: for he useth the same manner of speech there. Isaack saw that he was barren, and yet he had no other hope to be saved, he is as it were a cursed creature, and as it were at the pits brink, except he have issue, and all this while, that God which had made promise thereof in the person of his father, seemeth to mock him and leaveth him there, where he must needs languish: and that as often as he beheld his wife he might thus think with himself, Lo, a glass, wherein I see that God hath rejected us, and that he maketh no account of us, and that he hath turned his back towards us, that his promise is frustrate, that it hath no force or efficacy towards us.

See (I say) how Isaack had daily to bear with such assaults: and we ought well to weigh all these things (as I have already said:) but forasmuch as we do not regard to what end the holy Ghost speaketh unto us of Isaack, and because we know not how to apply that to our instruction which is here spoken of him: see why it ought to make us lose no courage at all: but when there is but one Blast of wind, by and by we are beaten down. And why so? for we ought to have thought thus on this sort. Go to, how is it that Isaack hath so firm constancy, and that for the space of twenty years? he quailed not, albeit, it seemed to him that GOD had mocked him: this was because that he was patient, and because he knew, it behooved him

not to set God the time wherein he had to perform his promise: but that he must submit himself to him and do him this honor to know that his works are incomprehensible, and that he knoweth the fit times and seasons, to perform that he hath pronounced: to be short, that it is not our part to set him a law: but that it is meet that we keep silence, and that we murmur not, if things fall not out according to our appetite and desire: but that we must wait till he accomplish his own works, yea, although we see all things contrary: Nevertheless, it behooveth that our faith prevail against all the world, even as Saint John saith in his Canonical Epistle. Now inasmuch as all this is nothing, and it vanisheth from before our eyes: and when we read this history, it is so coldly done, that we receive no fruit by it. See, also why GOD punisheth us for our ingratitude: because we are so delicate, that as soon as there cometh, not a storm or some great Whirlwind, but a little puff, behold we are forthwith shaken, and in the end do fall away. So much the rather then it behooveth that we mark well that which is here spoken: to wit, that Isaack continued to trust in GOD, although that by the space of twenty years, it seemed that he could have no issue. Now that he persevered, it appeareth by that which Moyses saith.

For Isaack prayed unto the Lord for his wife, and was heard, so as his wife conceived.

When it is said, that he prayed to the Lord, we must not think that he only waited till that time was accomplished: but seeing that his wife was barren, he had his recourse to GOD, which was the only remedy. What? seemeth it then that he lost his time, and that he cast his Prayers in the Air, and that they never came to God's ears? For a man would say so. For if he had been heard, would not God then have declared by experience, that which he had promised him? But he saw nothing of all that. Then when Isaack had prayed one year, and twain: it is all one, as if he had spoken to a Rock or to a wall: God making wise as though he were deaf: that is to say, he showed not himself in any sort to have a favorable care to receive Isaack's requests: and this continued. But when this cometh unto the end of ten or twelve years, what would a man say, but that it were better to give over? For this is a marvelous hard and great temptation, that God should do nothing of that that he had promised at the end of fifteen years. But although he had put off to do it even to the twentieth year, yet nevertheless Isaack ceased not to pray, but always continued, and his prayer was a sure seal of his Faith. For he prayed not after the manner of the unbelievers, which ever wait to rage against God: but he followed the rule that is given us by Saint Paul (although it was not yet written). And that was to join thanksgiving with our prayers, referring ourselves wholly

unto God, and quietly waiting for such an issue from him as could not yet be seen. Like as then when Isaack continued still to cast all his heaviness into the bosom of God, and all the care that oppressed him, and all the sorrows, griefs and anguishes, wherein he was enclosed: when he reposed all this in the bosom of God, this was a sure trial of his faith.

This then is that we have to learn by his example: to wit, that we think not that God hath bound himself unto us to do all that he hath spoken at the first dash: but after that he hath once spoken, he will not give any sign to accomplish his work and we will think that all that he had promised was nothing else (as men say,) but words and wind. It behooveth then that we be holden in, with such patience: (as also the Apostle exhorteth us hereto, in the tenth Chapter to the Hebrews) (Hebrews 10:37) that from day to day, from year to year, and all our life long, and as if nothing were, that we hold ourselves there in quiet and hold our peace before God, to the end we skirmish not, nor make any broil, nor plead against him, nor summon him, according as our fickle appetites would move us. And hereupon we have to put that in practice which the Apostle allegeth out of the Prophet Habacuc: (Habakkuk 2:3) That if he forslow his promise, we should wait, and it shall not linger. He there setteth down two things: he saith in deed that the promise of God shall not be foreslowed: that is to say, that it shall have a certain and undoubted execution, and in it, season: But concerning us and our sense or feeling, he saith, it shall linger: so that we have need patiently to wait. Behold then how our faith must be tried. For if we hope that God will show himself faithful towards us, and that we remain firm and constant, it behooved that we be often again and again exercised in prayers and supplications: for faith must not be idle, to be short, if we have to live here beneath, as poor miserable wretches, and that some must be afflicted with diseases, and others with poverty, that everyone hath to endure many afflictions and miseries: that nevertheless we go forward, and that we know, when God promiseth us to be our father, it is not that he meaneth to show it always apparently to the eye. He will give us indeed some taste of his goodness, as much as shall be necessary, yea we shall have therein to satisfy ourselves, so that our faith be always joined thereunto: in such sort that we shall feel, that that which he hath pronounced is not to deceive us. Open thy mouth and I will fill it. (Psalm 81:10) But howsoever it be, it behooveth that we wait always by faith, for that which yet appeareth not, and which is as it were far from us, and seemeth to be impossible. Again, when we shall be thus grounded and stayed upon the truth of God, and that we shall suffer ourselves to be afflicted by many miseries, that yet, we have that care and

zeal to pray and call upon God both morning and evening, and have our recourse unto him: for this is our only comfort. This therefore is not a thing lightly to be passed over, when Moyses rehearseth, that Isaack prayed unto god for the bareness of his wife, and that God heard him. For on the one side we see the perseverance which Isaack had in staying himself upon God, and making request unto him: on the other side we see that God was not deaf to his requests: but this was not, for that he showed himself at the first dash. For a man would have said, that Isaack was abused to run so unto God morning and evening, and that it had been better that he had given over all: but at the end of twenty years, God came suddenly, to the end he might show that men are too hasty and headlong in their desires: and here see, what is the cause that often times his name is blasphemed, and men will accuse him for that he worketh not according to our fantasy: this (say I) proceedeth of impatience. Now we have also to note, that Isaack knew that it was a great benefit of God, to give his issue. For when God had pronounced, *Increase and multiply*, according as we have seen, it is to show that neither men nor beasts could bring forth and increase, but by his power, that we should not think that it came by adventure. If therefore Bulls, horses, and Asses cannot engender [*beget, procreate*] unless God shed out his blessing and secret power, what shall be of men? For we are far more noble creatures, inasmuch as god hath formed us according to his own image. So that when we see that both men and beasts are increased by generation, we must thereby call to memory that this is from the word of God, which hath issued out of his mouth, *Increase and multiply*, (Genesis 1:28) which yet even at this day showeth itself, but we must go farther: to wit, that God keepeth this blessing and liberality to himself, to the end to distribute it as he seeth good. For we see that all engender [*beget, procreate*] not alike: Some have no children, others one or two, and others again have them by dozens. So then when see such an inequality, it behooveth is too acknowledge that it is a special benefit of God to have children: as also it is expressly said in the Psalm, (Psalm 127:3) that the fruit of the womb (for so the Scripture speaketh) is a reward of God. And so we must in this behalf, have recourse unto him. And therefore those that desire so greatly to have children, they must follow always the example of Isaack. For they will say indeed, O I would have Children: but of thinking upon God, there is neither mention, nor news. And forasmuch as God is defrauded of his honor, lo, why he withdraweth his hand: or rather if he give an offspring, forasmuch as they are a profane people, he will give them children which shall scratch out their eyes. For their children are as young serpents, or

thorns, for to prick and pierce them even to the heart. Behold therefore what is the cause that many have no offspring to succeed them: or if they have, it is for their farther evil: forasmuch as they have not addressed themselves to God, to obtain all of his blessing. Let us therefore mark well, that that which is here showed as concerning our father Isaack, is that he seeing his wife barren, prepared himself to God knowing very well, that it was of him that he ought to demand issue. And indeed, what will men allege here against this blessing? If we mark that which is written in Job, (Job 14) that when a child cometh into the world, it is a lively image of the incomprehensible power of God, which cannot be sufficiently esteemed. For whereof is it that an infant is engendered [*begat, procreated*], and after it is conceived, how liveth it in the womb of the mother? And further, how is it, that he cometh forth? If a man mark all these things, who will be so brutish, to say that men engender [*beget, procreate*] them by their own strength and industry? Let us then hold fast this lesson: which is that they that are married and desire offspring, that they ask it of God: and that for two reasons. The first, because God has reserved this in his own hand, as we have even now alleged out of the Psalm. The second is that it is not enough that their houses be full of children, unless that God always govern them. For it were much better that they had no offspring at all, than to have a perverse seed, accursed and full of mischief. So then let fathers learn (in this behalf) to follow the example of Isaack. But let us also diligently note, that Isaack prayed not for an offspring, only after the natural appetite of men: But he looked up higher: that is to say, because that it behooved that of him should proceed the salvation of the world in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the which shall be deducted more at large hereafter.

But now let us fall down before the holy majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our faults, and praying him that he will make us to feel them more and more, and that it may be to humble us, and to bring us to true repentance: and that we may be in such sort touched with fear, that we may desire nothing but to be stripped of all our earthly affections and lusts to the end we may be clothed with his righteousness, until that he shall have drawn us to a full and perfect perfection. And that he will not only do this good unto us.

www.sounddoctrine.net