

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

A Sermon

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“And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.”—Genesis xxvii. 38.

You know the story of Esau and Jacob.* Esau was the elder of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah; the birthright was his by right, but he despised it. He was a profane person, who did not prize the hereditary privilege which was really his, and actually sold his right to it to his younger brother, Jacob, for a mess of “pottage of lentiles.” Time rolled on, and Isaac, feeling the infirmities of age creeping upon him, determined to give to Esau the blessing to which, as his elder son, he was entitled. Rebekah wanted the blessing to be given to her younger son, and therefore resorted to a stratagem in order to make the poor blind father believe that Jacob was Esau, and in that way he gained the blessing by fraud. When Esau came in, and found that the blessing was given to Jacob, and that it could not be revoked, he cried bitterly, and besought his father to give him “but one blessing.”

The whole story reflects no credit upon any of the persons concerned. It certainly brings no credit to Isaac; he was a true believer in God, but he was a man of an easy-going, gentle spirit, who did not control his household as he ought to have done; and it appears that, in his later days, he craved dainty dishes to tempt his appetite, “savoury meat,” such as he asked Esau to prepare for him, and so he did not wait upon God for guidance as to the bestowal of his paternal blessing; but, in direct opposition to the divine purpose, determined to give the blessing to the son whom

* See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 239, “Jacob and Esau;” and *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,718, “Certain Singular Subjects.”

God had not chosen. It was a bad thing for the household to be divided as it was,—the husband and wife at cross purposes, Rebekah seeking the blessing for her favourite son, and Isaac preferring the bolder spirit of the wilder man. I cannot excuse either Rebekah or Jacob; they were acting very wickedly in trying to get Isaac's blessing by fraud and falsehood; neither can I justify Esau, for he was trying to keep what he had sold to his brother, and what he had despised, and contemptuously called "this birthright."

One thing is certain; God's providence, notwithstanding their sin, carried out God's purpose. It was no business of theirs, as it is no business of ours, to try to fulfil God's decrees. God would have managed the whole affair far better without Rebekah's meddling, and the foolish mother would not have had to send from home her darling son, nor would he have had to go away as an exile, to endure all that he had to endure at the hands of the grasping Laban. Still, God over-ruled the evil, and his design was accomplished, as it ever is and will be.

My special purpose, at this time, is to take this exceedingly bitter cry of the disappointed Esau, and use it for two purposes; first, *by way of warning*; and, secondly, *by way of encouragement*, taking it then out of its immediate context.

I. First, I am going to use Esau's cry BY WAY OF WARNING.

Beware, my dear hearers, first, of ever *giving up spiritual benefits for anything that is carnal*, or bartering eternal blessings for anything temporal. Esau came in from the chase hungry and faint; Jacob's mess of red pottage smelt delicious to him, and when he begged for it as a starving man craves food, his crafty brother sold it to him in exchange for his birthright as Isaac's elder son. Esau's sin consisted in his willingness to sell the covenant blessing at such a price as that; yet how many nowadays are selling their souls just as cheaply as Esau sold his birthright!

Some sell their souls for what they call "pleasure." They say that they wish to be saved, but a little transient gaiety exercises more fascination over their minds than all eternal joys or the delights of present fellowship with God. The time will come when they will rue their fatal choice, and call themselves a thousand fools; but, just now, they sneer at anything like self-denial with a view to eternal blessedness, and count that man wise who makes the moments fly most merrily, who is satisfied with the passing "pleasure" of the hour. Foolish creatures of the day; I would to God that ye were only creatures of a day, that would die like the insects of a summer's evening! But for immortal souls to barter eternal happiness for present joys is folly indeed.

We have known some sell their souls for gain. They are making money in a dishonest or disreputable way. To become Christians, they must give up their business; and they frankly say that they cannot afford it. Their shop would never "pay" if it were closed on Sundays; their trade would never "prosper" if it were conducted on Christian principles! Possibly it is an evil trade, and the gain from it comes out of the vices of men. There are such trades; God save all of us from having anything to do with them!

But with many, the glitter of the thirty pieces of silver is more fascinating than the Christ of God; and, Judas-like, they take the silver, deliberately reject the Saviour, and so commit spiritual suicide.

We have known some sell their souls for the sake of the love of their friends. They laughed at you because you frequented a place of worship, and expressed some anxiety about your eternal welfare, and made some little reform in your outward life; and because of that laughter, you have gone back like a coward. You have turned your back on heaven, and are going down to hell, merely to escape the jeers and sneers of sinners like yourself! Such conduct is unworthy of anyone who calls himself a man; and such conduct will surely bring down the just condemnation of God upon anyone who is guilty of so acting. Yet how many snatch up the mess of pottage, and push away from them heavenly blessings for fear somebody or other should call them Methodists or Puritans, and sneer at them for their precision of character!

Alas! some have even sold their souls for the cup of the drunkard. The intoxicating cup, which is very rarely, if ever, a benefit to anyone, even when taken in what is called moderation, leads to the certain damnation of many if they touch a single drop of it. It has allured thousands into the jaws of hell; they could not resist its spell when once it fell upon them. It is, alas! only too true that men, who were once honourable and loving husbands and fathers, have become brutes and monsters; nay, I slander the brutes when I compare them with many men whom I have seen, who have seemed, through strong drink, to have made themselves into incarnate fiends. There is the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and there the fire-water, which has its origin among the flames of hell; and yet, when the choice is left to men, many of them prefer the fiery liquor to that water which would be in them "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Some of those men who are selling their souls for drink are with us here; oh that God would give them grace enough to see themselves as they really are in his sight, that they might then ask for the grace which would make them to be new creatures in Christ Jesus!

Others have sold their souls for lust;—lust which I must not now describe, lest the cheek of modesty should be caused to blush. Alas! alas! we have known some who have stood high in the esteem of their fellow-men, and some who have even dared to enter the visible Church of God, who, all the time, have preferred their "mistress" to the Messiah; and, as surely as they continue to do so, the day will come when they will rue it. Oh, that they had the grace to rue it now, and to escape from their Delilahs! It will need more than human strength to shake off this deadly Hydra, whose cruel folds have twisted themselves so tightly around them.

Beware, next, of *being content with a secondary blessing*. Esau did not seem to care that Jacob had the spiritual blessing; as he could not get that, he appeared willing to be content with a temporal one; and many a man says, "Give me a prosperous business,

give me plenty to eat and drink; let me enjoy myself, and have my full swing in this life; and then, as for those joys of which Christians talk, I do not care a snap of the finger about them. They may have their fine country up among the stars for all that I care if I can only have my good things here." Yes, I know that is how you talk, my friends, but I charge every sensible man here not to talk or act like that. Even if you could sell your soul for fifty years of intense physical or mental delight, what would become of your soul when the fifty years came to an end; and if you could have the fifty years extended to seventy, or even to a hundred, what would become of your soul at the end of the century? And what would become of your soul for ever? It is for ever, let men say what they will. "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment: but the righteous into life *eternal*:" "the punishment" is of the same duration as the "life"—for ever and ever. Is it worth while to make such a bargain as that,—to buy a mess of red pottage at the price of your immortal soul? I charge each one of you to buy the truth, and sell it not, to lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, to get Christ, to get peace and pardon, to get acceptance with God, to get heaven in the way that this Book tells you to get it. If you only succeed in getting broad acres of fertile fields, they must all be left; if you amass a great store of gold and silver, it must all be left to your heirs, who will probably laugh at the thought of the fool who hoarded so much for them to scatter. Do not act so foolishly, but seek to get the chief blessing; may God graciously enable you to get it this very hour!

Remember that, if you leave this world without getting this blessing, you will, like Esau, find no place of repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears. Isaac could not recall what he had said, and God will never alter what he has said. There has been spreading, in this country, and in other lands also, the idea of universal salvation; and, mark you, wherever that doctrine spreads, vice must and will spread as the natural and inevitable consequence. When men are taught to believe in ultimate universal salvation, their immediate and legitimate inference is, "Then we may live as we like, and all will come right in the end;" and they *will* live as they like, but all will *not* come right in the end! They are ambassadors of the devil who teach that lying doctrine, and they will have to answer for it at the judgment-bar of God. I bring you no such falsehood as that. I tell you what God's Book of Truth tells me, which is that, if you live and die without repentance, without faith, and without holiness, as surely as the righteous will live for ever in heaven, just as surely will you live for ever in hell. I implore you, as you value your immortal soul, do not imperil its eternal interests by trusting these dreams and fictions, for that is what they are. He who is righteous when he dies will be righteous for ever, and he who is unrighteous then will be unrighteous for ever; so that, if you do not wish to have to weep and gnash your teeth in anguish and in anger at your own stupidity, fly now, I pray you, to the hope that is set before you in the gospel, and lay hold of Jesus, who alone can save you. It is no

pleasure to me to have to utter this solemn message; I deliver it, from an aching heart, as the burden of the Lord; and having given you the warning, I leave it with you as I pass on to the second part of my subject.

II. Now I have more pleasant work to do, and that is, to use my text BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

I would that, this very hour, from many hearts there might arise this cry of Esau, only giving it a far higher meaning, "Hast thou but one blessing, my Father? Bless me, even me also, O my Father." And first, unconverted men and women, *is it not time that you were blessed by God?* Will not each one of you say to yourself, "Is it not time that I was blessed by God? So many dear to me have been blessed;—my mother has long been in heaven; my sister is a member of the church; some who sat side by side with me in this pew have believed in Jesus; when will the blessing come to me? The shower has fallen all around me; am I to be left for ever dry? The great tide of grace has seemed to sweep right up to my feet; will it never cast its gracious spray over me? I am getting on in years, and I was brought here as a child, and now I bring my own child; but I am not yet saved. Many of my friends have died since first I heard the gospel, and I have been to their funerals; I have lost first one relative, and then another; if I had been the one to be taken, alas, alas, what misery would my soul have been in at this moment! I have heard a great many plain gospel sermons. Our minister does not try to make a display of oratory; he always aims at preaching to our hearts. I know that he wants to bring me to Jesus, and that he would be delighted if he heard that some word of his, or anybody else's, had brought me to trust in Christ as my Saviour. It is no small privilege to hear the gospel faithfully preached and I have at times felt the power of that gospel, and have resolved to repent, and then I have turned back, and here I am, still unsaved. It seems a strange thing that some who were morally worse than I have been have entered into the kingdom of heaven while I have remained outside, and that some, who had not heard the gospel half as long as I had, accepted it, while I have so far refused it." I wish you would continue talking to yourself in that strain, both here and at home; perhaps God will bless it to you, and especially if you add to it this prayer, "O Lord, it is time that I had thy blessing. Bless me, even me also, O my Father! Pass me not by, O thou loving, gracious, forgiving God, have mercy upon me, and save me!"

The next question that I have to put to you is this. *Does not the plenitude of God's grace encourage you, whoever you may be, to seek his blessing?* Esau could only say to his father, "Hast thou but one blessing?" And, truly, his father had but one that was worth having; but you are not talking to Isaac, you are talking to Jehovah; and when you approach him to seek his blessing, you know that he can bless as many as he wills, and that, if he should withhold the blessing, he would be none the richer, and if he should give it, he would be none the poorer, for he is an infinite God, able to do for all who come to him all that they need. God has innumerable sons and daughters; why should not you be among

them? He has a blessing for every one of them, for of his children it can be truly said, "If children, then heirs," all of them heirs; then why should not you be among them? If I knew that only three or four persons could be saved, I would not rest till I knew that I was one of them; but since God has so large a family, surely I may have good hope in coming to him, if he gives me the grace to say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned."

It should encourage you to seek God's blessing when you think of the plentitude that there is in Jesus Christ, God's Son. The merit of Christ was infinite; the sheep, for whom he laid down his life, are innumerable as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. All who have believed in him, and all who shall yet believe in him, belong to that redeemed flock; so why should not you be among them? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," for "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

You ought also to be encouraged to seek God's blessing by the plentitude and power of the Holy Spirit. He is able to soften the hardest heart, and to subdue the most stubborn will. There is no sinful habit that he cannot overcome. He can give you the grace to enable you to resist the strongest temptation, and to conquer the fiercest besetting sin. There is almighty power in the ever-blessed Spirit, so that there is no limit to his regenerating and sanctifying work.

Well, then, with the infinite Father, and the infinite Redeemer, and the infinite Spirit, you need not say, "Hast thou but one blessing?" but you may open your mouth wide, that God may fill it. We are still authorized by the Giver of the great gospel feast to cry, "Yet there is room." The provisions of that royal banquet are not merely for the few who belong to some insignificant little sect, and who reckon themselves to be all of the Lord's elect. I can, by faith, see enormous tables laden with the oxen and the fatlings that have been killed, for the great King has made a great supper, in honour of his Son's marriage, and he has bidden many to come to it. I know that heaven is not meant for a small, select company of saints, for John saw there "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."* Then why should not *you* be among them? Ask yourself that question on your knees before God. If I was ill, and there was only one physician in the whole of London, I would try to seek him out, but I should not be very hopeful of being healed by him. But the hospital of grace has room in it for all the patients who ever will come to it; and never did the porters have to shut the door, and say, "There is no room for any more." That can never be the case. God "delighteth in mercy." There is such a fulness of grace in Christ Jesus that

* Mr. Spurgeon's Exposition on this passage, and the remaining verses of Rev. vii., is given in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,704.

whosoever cometh to him he will in no wise cast out.* Then should not this encourage each one of you to believe in Jesus Christ, and so to live for ever, for "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life"?

Further, dear friends, *are there any valid reasons why you should not be blessed?* Do you really want to be blessed by God? Some one says, "Oh, that my sins were pardoned! Oh, that I had a new heart and a right spirit! I fain would find the Saviour if I could." Is there any reason why you cannot find him? "I have been a very great sinner." That is no reason, for many great sinners have found Christ; so why should not you? "But I have a very hard heart." That is no reason why you should not be saved, for many very hard hearts have been softened by the Holy Spirit; and when you have a redemption which is of infinite value, and a Holy Spirit with infinite power to renew the heart, the greatness of past sin or the deepness of present depravity cannot be a reason why infinite mercy should not be shown to you. Can you find me any text in the Bible where it is written that you cannot be saved? I have heard an anxious soul sometimes say, "I know I never shall be saved." But how do you know that? I believe that it is not so. Christ himself said that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" and even under the old dispensation, God said, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "Come now, and let us reason together, . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You cannot put your finger upon a single passage of Scripture which proves that you will be lost, so do not believe that it must be so till you have it from God's own mouth. Never imagine that you are excluded from his pardoning mercy till he himself says that you are; and he has never said that yet.

Who is there that stands in your way? I know that the devil does, but then Christ is the devil's Master, and he can enable you to overcome him. Do you know of one true minister of the gospel who would push you back if he saw you coming to the Saviour? I know one who would gladly give you a helping hand, and draw you to Christ if he could. Would your godly mother be grieved if she heard that you were converted? Is anybody (except Satan) praying that you may not be saved? I never heard of a prayer of that sort, and I never shall; but day and night the Lord's elect cry unto him, "Bring the wanderers in! Let Jesus see of the travail of his soul until he is satisfied."

Did you ever hear me preach a sermon to prove that you had no right to lay hold on eternal life? I have heard of very discouraging sermons preached by ministers, who seemed to be afraid that too many people would get to heaven,—as if it were "a close borough" for a few special favourites in the very small congregation

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 3,000, "Come and Welcome,"—the Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon that will be sent to anyone in the whole world who sends a postcard, containing the sender's name and address, to Messrs. Passmore & Alabaster, 4, Paternoster Buildings, London, E.C.

at "Rehoboth" or "Jireh." That is dying out, and I bless God that it never has been heard here. We preach to you a great gospel, and a free gospel, and our hearts are yearning over you with a strong desire that you may be saved.

Can you point to any attribute in God, or to any action on God's part, which looks like malevolence towards you? You tell me that he has dealt severely with you in his providence. If so, it was that he might drive you to himself. Has he broken your idols in pieces? If so, it is that you may worship the one living and true God. Are you very poor? Perhaps it is the best thing that could happen to you. How few rich folk ever enter the kingdom of heaven! Can you see anything in Jesus Christ that forbids sinners from coming to him? Look at his wounds; do they say, "Sinner, keep away from me"? Look at his thorn-crowned brow; does that say, "I do not want you to come to me"? Look at his widely-extended arms upon the cross; do they repel you? Nay, rather, are they not kept open that the biggest sinners may get at his heart, and find peace and pardon there? Think of the Holy Spirit, and read about what he has done; and then see if there is anything in him to show that he does not want you to come to Christ. Why, he is the blessed Spirit who draws sinners to Christ; he does not drive them away from Christ. If the Spirit convinces you of sin, it is not in order to make you despair;—except to make you despair of saving yourself, and that is a good work, for it will lead you to look away to Jesus, that you may find eternal life in him. I dare to say that there is nothing in the Father, there is nothing in the Son, and there is nothing in the Holy Spirit, which should make any truly repenting and believing sinner say, "Mercy is not for me." On the contrary, there is a great attraction about each blessed Person of the Divine Trinity to draw sinners to himself.

Now let me suggest one or two *reasons why you should find mercy, if you come for it in God's way*; and God's way is that you should believe in his Son, Jesus Christ,—that you should trust your soul into his eternal keeping. If you do that, there are many reasons why you may expect to find mercy at his hands.

First, it would be an answer to the prayers of God's people. It is certain that God hears his people's prayers. I know that many have been praying that you may be saved. So your salvation would assure them that their prayers had been heard, and surely that is what God delights to do. It would be wrong for you to rely upon other people's prayers for your salvation; but I do bid you take comfort from the thought that it would cheer the saints of God to see you saved. The happiest church-meetings that we ever have are those when there are many converts coming forward to tell what the Lord has done for their souls. Now the Lord Jesus very dearly loves his Church; she is his spouse; and as a good husband loves to please his wife, so Jesus loves to please his Church; and nothing can please his Church so much as to see sinners saved, so I think that is one good reason why we may expect that he will save many of you.

Beside that, if you are saved, whether you are a great sinner or a smaller one, Christ will have a new servant; and if you have been a big black sinner, Christ will have a specially good servant if he converts you from the error of your ways. Whatever you do, you do it heartily; you now persecute the saints with all your might, but if you were converted, you would love Christ as Mary Magdalene did, or as Saul of Tarsus did; and our Master delights to have such a servant as you would make! I trust, therefore, that you will be encouraged by the thought that, as he wants many such servants, perhaps he will have you as one of them.

And, again, if you were converted, it would make the angels glad. Fresh hallelujahs and hosannas would resound throughout high heaven if you were born again, a new creature in Christ Jesus. They would set all the bells a-ringing with celestial carillons, because another sinner had been saved from going down to the pit. I think God will do it, for he loves to hear the melodies of the holy angels and of the spirits of just men made perfect.

Besides, it would be to his own glory in heaven above and down here among the sons of men. Oh, if the Lord would but convert some of the cardinals and priests of the Church of Rome, and some of the great infidel philosophers of the present day, and some of the licentious "nobility" as they are called, what high honour would be brought to the name of Jesus Christ! I must not detain you longer, but I must just urge you, if you really want the blessing of God, in the shape of pardoned sin and acceptance by Christ, to seek it from the Lord as earnestly as Esau sought the blessing of Isaac. He sought in vain, but you will not seek in vain. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be saved, be you who or what you may. We have God's Word for it,—the Word of God who cannot lie. Esau pleaded piteously with his father: "Bless me, even me also, O my father." He was a rough, wild man, yet plaintively he put his plea before his old father, Isaac: "Bless me, your elder son, your Esau, your favourite." Then, at last, he burst into tears, backing up his entreaties with his tearful appeal, "Bless me, even me also, O my father." You will not seek God's blessing in vain if you do but seek it sincerely and earnestly. Without his blessing, you are condemned already." Without his blessing, you will be condemned for ever. With his blessing, there is heaven for you; without it, there is hell. With his blessing, there is peace and joy; without it, there is a gloomy future, ever growing darker and darker until it becomes eternal midnight. Cry mightily to God now for his blessing; and while you cry, look to Jesus on the cross, bleeding out his life for the guilty. One believing look at him saves the soul for ever. Again I quote Paul's words to the jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I do not know what more I can say. If I have been talking to sensible men who value their immortal souls, and God blesses my message, I have said enough. If I speak to those who are besotted with their sin, and bent on committing spiritual suicide, I could not say enough though I spoke till your ears could no longer hear, and my tongue could no longer

speak. Eternal Spirit, arrest the elect of God this very hour, and bring them to see themselves as they are, and then to see Christ as their Saviour, and force from each one of them this cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my Father." Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

HEBREWS XII.

The apostle, having described the heroes of the faith, represents them as witnesses of the great race* which Christians in all ages have to run. All through the chapter he keeps up the idea of the great Olympic games, and represents the saints as occupied with spiritual athletics in the presence of God, the angels, and glorified men.

Verse 1. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*

In those games, those who ran and wrestled wore very little clothing, or often nothing at all. A runner might lose the race through being entangled by his scarf, so he laid aside everything that might hinder or hamper him. Oh, for that blessed consecration to our heavenly calling, by which everything that would hinder us shall be put aside, that we may give ourselves, disentangled, to the great gospel to race!

2. *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

His race is complete; his wrestling is over; so he sits down with the great Judge of all as the One who has won his crown for ever. Let us look to him.†

3. *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.‡*

Think how he wrestled, think how he ran; and let your consideration of him nerve you for your struggle, and brace up every muscle of your spirit, so that you will be determined that, as he won, so will you by the divine help of him who is "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

4. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

Paul reminds you that, in your wrestling, you may have to endure a still sterner struggle: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

5—7. *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*

The apostle's intention is to harden us to any suffering that may come to us in this mortal life. He does so first by showing us that we are like wrestlers and racers, and that we must expect to endure much hardship if we are to win the crown. We are to "endure hardness." The crown cannot be won without it. You know what men will do to win an earthly crown; but the heavenly crown is an immortal, unfading one; so how much more may be expected of you in the way of patient endurance in your effort to win it. Then Paul changes the figure, and says, "You are the sons of

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,037, "The Rule of the Race."

† See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,073, "A Honeycomb."

‡ See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 236, "The Shameful Sufferer."