

CHAPTER 33

We read, in the former chapter, how Jacob had power with God, and prevailed; here we find what power he had with men too, and how his brother Esau was mollified, and, on a sudden, reconciled to him; for so it is written, ~~2067~~ Proverbs 16:7, “When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Here is,

- I. A very friendly meeting between Jacob and Esau (v. 1-4).
- II. Their conference at their meeting, in which they vie with each other in civil and kind expressions. Their discourse is
 1. About Jacob's family (v. 5-7).
 2. About the present he had sent (v. 8-11).
 3. About the progress of their journey (v. 12-15).
- III. Jacob's settlement in Canaan, his house, ground, and altar (v. 16-20).

~~033~~ GENESIS 33:1-4

JACOB'S INTERVIEW WITH ESAU

Here,

I. Jacob discovered Esau's approach, v. 1. Some think that his lifting up his eyes denotes his cheerfulness and confidence, in opposition to a dejected countenance; having by prayer committed his case to God, he went on his way, *and his countenance was no more sad*, ~~0018~~ 1 Samuel 1:18. Note, Those that have cast their care upon God may look before them with satisfaction and composure of mind, cheerfully expecting the issue, whatever it may be; come what will, nothing can come amiss to him whose heart is fixed, trusting in God. Jacob sets himself upon his watch-tower to see what answer God will give to his prayers, ~~3011~~ Habakkuk 2:1.

II. He put his family into the best order he could to receive him, whether he should come as a friend or as an enemy, consulting their decency if he came as a friend and their safety if he came as an enemy, v. 1, 2. Observe

what a different figure these two brothers made. Esau is attended with a guard of 400 men, and looks big; Jacob is followed by a cumbersome train of women and children that are his care, and he looks tender and solicitous for their safety; and yet Jacob had the birthright, and was to have the dominion, and was every way the better man. Note, It is no disparagement to very great and good men to give a personal attendance to their families, and to their family affairs. Jacob, at the head of his household, set a better example than Esau at the head of his regiment.

III. At their meeting, the expressions of kindness were interchanged in the best manner that could be between them.

1. Jacob bowed to Esau, v. 3. Though he feared Esau as an enemy, yet he did obeisance to him as an elder brother, knowing and remembering perhaps that when Abel was preferred in God's acceptance before his elder brother Cain, yet God undertook for him to Cain that he should not be wanting in the duty and respect owing by a younger brother. *Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him,* ~~GEN~~ Genesis 4:7. Note,

(1.) The way to recover peace where it has been broken is to do our duty, and pay our respects, upon all occasions, as if it had never been broken. It is the remembering and repeating of matters that separates friends and perpetuates the separation.

(2.) A humble submissive carriage goes a great way towards the turning away of wrath. Many preserve themselves by humbling themselves: the bullet flies over him that stoops.

2. Esau embraced Jacob (v. 4): *He ran to meet him*, not in passion, but in love; and, as one heartily reconciled to him, he received him with all the endearments imaginable, *embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him.* Some think that when Esau came out to meet Jacob it was with no bad design, but that he brought his 400 men only for state, that he might pay so much the greater respect to his returning brother. It is certain that Jacob understood the report of his messengers otherwise, ~~GEN~~ Genesis 32:5, 6. Jacob was a man of prudence and fortitude, and we cannot suppose him to admit of a groundless fear to such a degree as he did this, nor that the Spirit of God would stir him up to pray such a prayer as he did for deliverance from a merely imaginary danger: and, if there was not some wonderful change wrought upon the spirit of Esau at this time, I see not

how wrestling Jacob could be said to obtain such power with men as to denominate him a *prince*. Note,

(1.) God had the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them when and how he pleases, by a secret, silent, but resistless power. He can, of a sudden, convert enemies into friends, as he did two Sauls, one by restraining grace (^{QREB}1 Samuel 26:21, 25), the other by renewing grace, ^{402B}Acts 9:21, 22.

(2.) It is not in vain to trust in God, and to call upon him in the day of trouble; those that do so often find the issue much better than they expected.

3. They both wept. Jacob wept for joy, to be thus kindly received by his brother whom he had feared; and Esau perhaps wept for grief and shame, to think of the bad design he had conceived against his brother, which he found himself strangely and unaccountably prevented from executing.

^{QREB}GENESIS 33:5-15

JACOB'S INTERVIEW WITH ESAU

We have here the discourse between the two brothers at their meeting, which is very free and friendly, without the least intimation of the old quarrel. It was the best way to say nothing of it. They converse,

I. About Jacob's retinue, v. 5-7. Eleven or twelve little ones, the eldest of them no fourteen years old, followed Jacob closely: *Who are these?* says Esau. Jacob had sent him an account of the increase of his estate (^{QREB}Genesis 32:5), but made no mention of his children; perhaps because he would not expose them to his rage if he should meet him as an enemy, or would please him with the unexpected sight if he should meet him as a friend: Esau therefore had reason to ask, *Who are those with thee?* to which common question Jacob returns a serious answer, such as became his character: They are *the children which God hath graciously given thy servant*. It had been a sufficient answer to the question, and fit enough to be given to profane Esau, if he had only said, "They are my children;" but then Jacob would not have spoken like himself, like a man whose eyes were ever towards the Lord. Note, It becomes us not only to do common

actions, but to speak of them, *after a godly sort*, ^{<606>}John 1:6. Jacob speaks of his children,

1. As God's gifts; they are a *heritage of the Lord*, ^{<1038>}Psalm 128:3; 112:9; 107:41.

2. As choice gifts; he hath graciously given them. Though they were many, and now much his care, and as yet but slenderly provided for, yet he accounts them great blessings. His wives and children, hereupon, come up in order, and pay their duty to Esau, as he had done before them (v. 6, 7); for it becomes the family to show respect to those to whom the master of the family shows respect.

II. About the present he had sent him.

1. Esau modestly refused it because he had enough, and did not need it, v. 9. Note, Those who wish to be considered men of honour will not *seem* to be mercenary in their friendship: whatever influence Jacob's present had upon Esau to pacify him, he would not have it thought that it had any, and therefore he refused it. His reason is *I have enough*, I have *much* (so the word is), so much that he was not willing to take any thing that was his brother's. Note,

(1.) Many that come short of spiritual blessings, and are out of covenant, yet have much of this world's wealth. Esau had what was promised him, the fatness of the earth and a livelihood by his sword.

(2.) It is a good thing for those that have much to know that they have enough, though they have not so much as some others have. Even Esau can say, *I have enough*.

(3.) Those that are content with what they have must show it by not coveting what others have. Esau, for his part, needs it not, either to supply him, for he was rich, or to pacify him, for he was reconciled: we should take heed lest at any time our covetousness impose upon the courtesy of others, and meanly take advantage of their generosity.

2. Jacob affectionately urges him to accept it, and prevails, v. 10, 11. Jacob sent it, through fear (^{<1320>}Genesis 32:20), but, the fear being over, he now importunes his acceptance of it for love, to show that he desired his brother's friendship, and did not merely dread his wrath; two things he urges: —

(1.) The satisfaction he had in his brother's favour, of which he thought himself bound to make this thankful acknowledgment. It is a very high compliment that he passes upon him: *I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God*, that is, "I have seen thee reconciled to me, and at peace with me, as I desire to see God reconciled." Or the meaning is that Jacob saw God's favour to him in Esau's: it was a token for good to him that God had accepted his prayers. Note, Creature-comforts are comforts indeed to us when they are granted as answers to prayer, and are tokens of our acceptance with God. Again, It is matter of great joy to those that are of a peaceable and affectionate disposition to recover the friendship of those relations with whom they have been at variance.

(2.) The competency he had of this world's goods: *God has dealt graciously with me*. Note, If what we have in this world increase under our hands, we must take notice of it with thankfulness, to the glory of God, and own that therein he has dealt graciously with us, better than we deserve. It is he that gives *power to get wealth*, ~~CHR~~ Deuteronomy 8:18. He adds, "And *I have enough; I have all*," so the word is. Esau's enough was much, but Jacob's enough was all. Note, a godly man, though he have but little in the world, yet may truly say, "I have all,"

[1.] Because he has the God of all, and has all in him; all is yours if you be Christ's, ~~CHR~~ 1 Corinthians 3:22.

[2.] Because he has the comfort of all. *I have all, and abound*, ~~CHR~~ Philippians 4:18. He that thinks he has all is sure he has enough. He has all in prospect; he will have all shortly, when he comes to heaven: upon this principle Jacob urged Esau, and he took his present. Note, It is an excellent thing when men's religion makes them generous, free-hearted, and open-handed, scorning to do a thing that is paltry and sneaking.

III. About the progress of their journey.

1. Esau offers himself to be his guide and companion, in token of sincere reconciliation, v. 12. We never find that Jacob and Esau were so sociable with one another, and so affectionate, as they were now. Note, As for God his work is perfect. He made Esau, not only not an enemy, but a friend. This bone that had been broken, being well set, became stronger than ever. Esau has become fond of Jacob's company, courts him to Mount Seir: let us never despair of any, nor distrust God in whose hand all hearts are. Yet Jacob saw cause modestly to refuse this offer (v. 13, 14), wherein he

shows a tender concern for his own family and flocks, like a good shepherd and a good father. He must consider the children, and the flocks, with young, and not lead the one, nor drive the other, too fast. This prudence and tenderness of Jacob ought to be imitated by those that have the care and charge of young people in the things of God. They must not be over-driven, at first, by heavy tasks in religious services, but led, as they can bear, having their work made as easy to them as possible. Christ, the good Shepherd, does so, ²⁰¹¹Isaiah 40:11. Now Jacob will not desire Esau to slacken his pace, nor force his family to quicken theirs, nor leave them, to keep company with his brother, as many would have done, that love any society better than their own house; but he desires Esau to march before, and promises to follow him leisurely, as he could get forward. Note, It is an unreasonable thing to tie others to our rate; we may come with comfort, at last, to the same journey's end, though we do not journey together, either in the same path or with the same pace. There may be those with whom we cannot fall in and yet with whom we need not fall out by the way. Jacob intimates to him that it was his present design to come to him to Mount Seir; and we may presume he did so, after he had settled his family and concerns elsewhere, though that visit is not recorded. Note, When we have happily recovered peace with our friends we must take care to cultivate it, and not to be behind-hand with them in civilities.

2. Esau offers some of his men to be his guard and convoy, v. 15. He saw Jacob but poorly attended, no servants but his husbandmen and shepherds, no pages or footmen; and therefore, thinking he was as desirous as himself (if he could afford it) to take state upon him, and look great, he would needs lend him some of his retinue, to attend upon him, that he might appear like Esau's brother; but Jacob humbly refuses his offer, only desiring he would not take it amiss that he did not accept it: *What needeth it?*

(1.) Jacob is humble, and needs it not for state; he desires not to make a fair show in the flesh, by encumbering himself with a needless retinue. Note, It is the vanity of pomp and grandeur that they are attended with a great deal of which it may be said, *What needeth it?*

(2.) Jacob is under the divine protection, and needs it not for safety. Note, Those are sufficiently guarded that have God for their guard and are under a convoy of his hosts, as Jacob was. Those need not be beholden to an arm of flesh that have God for their arm every morning. Jacob adds, "Only *let*

me find grace in the sight of my lord; having thy favour, I have all I need, all I desire from thee.” If Jacob thus valued the good-will of a brother, much more reason have we to reckon that we have enough if we have the good-will of our God.

GENESIS 33:16-20

JACOB'S SETTLEMENT

Here, 1. Jacob comes to Succoth. Having in a friendly manner parted with Esau, who had gone to his own country (v. 16), he comes to a place where, it should seem, he rested for some time, set up booths for his cattle, and other conveniences for himself and family. The place was afterwards known by the name of Succoth, a city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan (it signifies booths), that when his posterity afterwards dwelt in houses of stone, they might remember that *the Syrian ready to perish* was their father, who was glad of booths (~~GEN~~Deuteronomy 26:5); such was the rock whence they were hewn.

2. He comes to Shechem; we read it, to *Shalem, a city of Shechem*; the critics generally incline to read it appellatively: *he came safely, or in peace, to the city of Shechem*. After a perilous journey, in which he had met with many difficulties, he came safely, at last, into Canaan. Note, Diseases and dangers should teach us how to value health and safety, and should help to enlarge our hearts in thankfulness, when our going out and coming in have been signally preserved. Here,

(1.) He buys a field, v. 19. Though the land of Canaan was his by promise, yet, the time for taking possession not having yet come, he is content to pay for his own, to prevent disputes with the present occupants. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have heaven on free-cost must not expect to have earth so.

(2.) He builds an altar, v. 20.

[1.] In thankfulness to God, for the good hand of his providence over him. He did not content himself with verbal acknowledgments of God's favour to him, but made real ones:

[2.] That he might keep up religion, and the worship of God, in his family. Note, Where we have a tent God must have an altar, where we have a house he must have a church in it. He dedicated this altar, where we have a house he must have a church in it. He dedicated this altar to the honour of *El-elohe-Israel* — *God, the God of Israel*, to the honour of God, in general, the only living and true God, the best of beings and first of causes; and to the honour of the God of Israel, as a God in covenant with him. Note, In our worship of God we must be guided and governed by the joint-discoveries both of natural and revealed religion. God had lately called him by the name of *Israel*, and now he calls God *the God of Israel*; though he is styled *a prince with God*, God shall still be a prince with him, his Lord and his God. Note, Our honours then become honours indeed to us when they are consecrated to God's honour; Israel's God is Israel's glory.