

# THE LOST BLESSING

## A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning, April 10th, 1864

By Mister JAMES WELLS

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“Thus Esau despised his birthright.” Genesis 25:34

WE took occasion, last Lord's day morning, to notice from these words three birthrights, the birthright of those who are born in the land of Bibles, as our land happily is; secondly, the birthright of the Savior; and thirdly, the birthright of the Christian. Some of the things belonging to the birthright of the Christian we noticed as set before us especially in a consecutive form in the 12th chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle leads us along from one privilege to another, reminding us, among the rest, of that perfection which is by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, called the spirits of just men made perfect; so they are just, first justified by Christ's mediatorial work, and that presents them before God perfect, and keeps them eternally perfect; and that God is the judge of such, in adjudging them to all that this justification in Jesus Christ can entitle them to: and that there, in this order of things, appears the Savior as the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel. These are the things that he brings not to any one's natural birth, but to the spiritual birth. “As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God;” and if sons, then heirs of God, joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ; “even unto as many as believed on his name.” Thus, we are brought by a supernatural birth, or by regenerating grace, into this possession. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

There are three more things which we have not attended to, which, though not contained immediately in our text, yet they are suggested by the text, and these three things are these: First, *the blessing which Esau, in despising his birthright, lost*; secondly, *the characters that Esau thus represents in despising his birthright*; thirdly, and lastly, *the principles upon which Esau was rejected and could find no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

First, then, *the blessing*, and of course the blessing here, in the history of it was temporal; but then we well know that the temporal has a spiritual significance in it, and it is intended to represent, by things that we do know, things that we do not know. There will, therefore, be no difficulty in reading out this morning the meaning of the blessing in the spiritual sense, which we have in the 27th chapter of this book. And the blessing which belonged to the birthright of Esau was fourfold. It consisted, first, of personal approbation, or of approbation of him personally. It consisted,

secondly, of abundance of all good things. It consisted, thirdly, of entire freedom; and, fourthly, of eternal defense. First, then, that which belonged to the birthright of Esau; the blessing consisted of personal acceptance, personal approbation. Hence Isaac expresses it like this: "See," he says, "the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed." This has reference, of course, to the fragrance of the garments in which Jacob was arrayed. And you will know, no doubt, very well how to apply this in the spiritual sense of the word. The question is, Where is the field which God has blessed? And then the question is, What was the Savior's field of labor? His field of labor was to work out and to bring in eternal righteousness, and that righteousness is that by which we are justified before God. His field of labor was to die for sinners, and thereby to redeem them; to die for sin, and thereby to destroy it; to die, suffering death under the curse, and thereby to put an end to that; to die the bitterest death that ever was, that no one else ever could, or ever can die, and thereby to take away the sting of death. Now, this was the field, then, of the Savior's labor; this is that field which the Lord has blessed. And to understand the words spiritually it stands like this: Here is a sinner brought to feel that he stands before God condemned. Revealed unto such an one is what the Savior has done in his life; that man receives the testimony of Christ's righteousness, and hereby such an one savors of Christ, and such an one is unto God a sweet savor of Christ.

The second part was that of abundance of all good things. "Therefore," as the consequence, seeing that you savor of the field which God has blessed, therefore, as a consequence of this, the Lord has so ordered it that one blessing stands connected with another, "Therefore God give you of the dew of heaven." Now, unto such the gospel is sure to be as dew; unto such; the gospel is sure to be refreshing. "And the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Now, this corn and wine; we take them both, at least, I do, to mean Jesus Christ. He is the corn; he is the sustenance. Let us keep close to him; we shall miss the substance if we miss him. God grant you plenty of corn, plenty of sustenance. And, I am, pure there is a sufficiency in Jesus Christ; we can never sink into despair while Jesus is our sustenance; he is the bread that endures to everlasting life, and to eat of that bread, or that which is implied in eating of that bread, means several things. I will just name one or two for the sake of clearness. First, we cannot live naturally without food. So, if you are brought to see, and to feel that you cannot be saved without Christ; that you cannot have eternal life without Christ, and that you cannot hope in God but by Jesus Christ, and if you can see that you cannot be sustained in your hope in God through life and when you come to die but by Jesus Christ; if you are thus far, that is one step towards eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God, and being brought to know your need of him. Hear what the Savior says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness and Christ is that righteousness that we are to hunger after. Now I feel, and I trust hundreds of you feel the same, that if Jesus Christ be taken away your hope is taken away; or if his perfection be taken away your hope is taken away. His perfection may be taken away and his name remain; but that would be of no use to you. You want this dear Savior in what God has made him, not in what men make him; for men make the Savior all sorts of things; some one thing, and some another; but God has constituted him that by which we are perfected forever. Now then, if you feel you can have no hope for time or for eternity but by him, that is one step towards being sustained by Christ Jesus the Lord. And only think of it, some of you that may not know the Lord, if you can exercise common reason for a moment, and think to yourself now, while you listen to me, well, is it so, then, that I am without God; that while God sustains me in his providence from day to day, yet presently I shall die, and shall reach to the last mercy I am ever to have, and then I shall be in the most fearful sense without God and without hope, not in the world,

but in hell? Now I say, only reflect upon it for a moment, what an awful curse human existence is without the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ! But if, on the other hand, brought to know our need of him, and to receive the testimony that is given concerning him, this is the way in which we shall have that sustenance by which we are supported in our hope and prayer, by which we can go on to serve the Lord our God. "Plenty of corn," there is an abundance of sustenance in Christ. It matters not how weak we are, nor how far we are gone in poverty and destitution; there is all sufficiency in him; Then not only plenty of corn, but wine. You know the dear Savior has chosen wine as the emblem of the blood of the everlasting covenant; and the plenty of wine I would there, when taken spiritually, understand just the same as I would understand those words where David says, "With you there is, forgiveness, and with you there is plenteous redemption." I would therefore take the plenty of wine to mean the all sufficiency of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But then wine there, the pure blood of the grape there, that pure blood of the grape that cheers, but does not inebriate; the wine there refers especially to its cheering power. Hence you read of the wine that cheers the heart of God and man. And then the plenty of wine will mean the all sufficiency of the blood of the everlasting covenant to cheer up the heaviest heart, to cheer the gloomiest soul, and to dissolve, the fetters of the man that is bound as with fetters of brass and of iron, and bring the soul out of prison, and give such an one such victory that he can tread down his sins, and tread down the devil, and tread down the world, and unbelief, and his troubles, and tread down mountains; and as he walks on in the strength of the blood of the everlasting covenant, he can say, with Deborah, "O my soul, you have trodden down strength." Here, then, is the second part of the blessing. I want no other corn, I want no other wine, I want no other sustenance, I want nothing else to make me cheerful.

The third part of the blessing is that of freedom. "Let people serve you, and nations bow down to you; be lord over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you." All this is language expressive of that dominion which the Christian has, the freedom which the Christian has. Everything must be subservient to the welfare of the Christian. There is not an adversary that would hinder you that shall not be made ultimately to help you; there is not a sin that has entangled you, or wounded you, or deformed you, or grieved you, or defiled you, that God will not render subservient to the furtherance of your eternal welfare. There is not a loss, there is not a bereavement of any kind whatever, but God will make the whole subservient to your eternal welfare. I know this is strong language; some ministers speak as though the grace of God could not be trusted, as though the carnal sympathies, and carnal views, and self-importance of the creature were to be consulted before the necessities of the really convinced sinner, and before the glories of that grace which shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life. Here, then, is the dominion, the freedom. If you are one with that divine dominion over all things, then you, in that oneness, have dominion. "He that overcomes," and "this is our victory, even our faith;" "and keeps my works," let them go, down you go directly; unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; and I will give him the morning star." And that morning star is Christ; Christ shall be the morning star; and that man shall shine forth to all eternity, like the bright and the morning star. "They that be wise shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." The savor of Christ, plenty to eat and drink, and that of the best kind; make us strong and cheerful; and entire dominion, everything must be subservient. You must not be in a hurry. God is sometimes overcome, and may be laughed at; be patient; the coming of the Lord draws nigh, and when he comes in, the enemy must go out; when he comes in, darkness must go out; when he comes in, there is an end to the enemy's reign. "Now is your hour;" it is only

an hour, a mystic hour, it may be a long hour; “and the power of darkness.” “The triumph of the wicked is but for a moment.” “Stand still, and see the salvation of God.” You have that freedom that is in Christ; and you have, to wait sometimes in prison until he who opens, and none can shut, shall come; and when he opens, who then can shut? When he comes and brings you out, and says, “I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it,” then you can again rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free.

The fourth part of the blessing is twofold: “Cursed be every one that curses you.” So Cain found it, and so Esau found it, and so Ishmael found it, and so King Saul found it, so Pharaoh found it, so Nebuchadnezzar found it, so Belshazzar found it, and so, Judas found it, and so the Jews found it; and so have all; so did old Balaam, he found it so. “Cursed is he that curses you.” “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” Do we thus desire our worst enemy to be execrated? No; our prayer for them is, that if it be the Lord’s will, the Lord may open their eyes, and bring them to love the same truth, the same Jesus Christ. That lies with God. “And blessed be he that blesses you.” So, if I have a union of soul to the man that savors of Christ, and lives upon the holy sustenance to which I have referred, and loves the liberty of the gospel; if I feel a union of soul to that man, and bless that man in the name of the Lord; I bless him, pass by, and say, “The Lord bless you;” bless you in the name of the Lord, as Melchizedek blessed Abraham. And all such are blessed. “Blessed is he that receives one of these little ones.” And you little ones must forgive me if I make a stepping-stone of you sometimes. Well, that is a very pretty thing to do. Well, I do. And how do you do it? Well, I think, now really, after all, am I a child of God? I look about and say, Well, where is that right and sense of sin, and groaning under it, that characterizes the child of God? Perhaps at that time I do not possess it. Where is that acquaintance with God that characterizes the child of God? Perhaps at that time I do not possess it. Where is that rejoicing recorded in the Bible, and which the saints have more or less entered into? Perhaps I do not as yet possess it. “To will is present with me.” I say, I feel hardly any will to do anything that is of God, I will tell you what I do then; I run off to the little ones, and I think, well, there is that man, and that woman; I recollect their testimony; I felt a union of soul to them, and I do to this day. I feel love to the brethren. “He that receives one of these little ones, receives me; and he that receives me, receives him that sent me.” So that I am obliged to make sort of stepping-stones of the little ones, to help me to get out of my troubles; and you are quite welcome to make use of me in the same way if you can sometimes. I am sure there is no harm in doing this; and I am very often glad to do so. Because the Christian is a man that cannot be presumptuous. If he concludes that he is a Christian, he must have some Bible evidence upon which to come to that conclusion. If a Christian concludes that he has a true and a saving hope in the Lord, he cannot be satisfied unless he can find in his soul some reason for that hope. He wants a reason for it; he cannot be put off with a vague, undefined hope; he must know why and wherefore it is that he concludes that he has a right to believe that God is on his side. I am very often thus searching about after evidences, and glad sometimes to get the humblest I can find, and here are helps to us. And perhaps that is one of the reasons why the Lord so tries us, that we may run about and gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost. We should lose sight of a great many of his miracles if he did not so lead us as to make us feel our need of them. Thus, then, the blessing is fourfold; first, the savor of Christ; second, abundance of all good things; third, freedom; fourth, eternal safety. “Cursed be everyone that curses you, and blessed be he that blesses you.”

Now we come to *the characters represented by Esau, who despised his birthright*. There are two characters, he represents; I mean, in his afterwards wanting the blessing, but was rejected. Here is a man faring sumptuously, and that every day. Presently this man lifts up his eyes in hell. Ah, now I am in hell; what would I give now if I belonged to Jesus Christ, if I were in that high-doctrine man's bosom where Lazarus is! I once hated that; that Abraham, called alone; that Abraham, brought into the bond of an immutable covenant; that Abraham, that fell in with the perfection of Christ's eternal priesthood; I once hated that; but what would I give now if I could, be where Lazarus is! I savor now of brimstone, not of Christ; I savor now of hell, not of heaven; I savor now of the fire of hell; not of the love of God. "Lifted up his eyes in hell!" what would he give now for something to sustain him, and enable him to get out of this awful state; what would he give now to have dominion over the fiends around him, to have dominion over the flames around him, to have dominion over the thunderbolts around him, what would he give now? "Behold, you despisers, wonder and perish." Esau, therefore, when he would have inherited the blessing, was rejected. So, when the soul arrives in hell, gladly, then would he inherit the blessing, but there is no hope there. But, remember, it is never too late while mortal life shall last.

People are not much in the habit of taking much trouble to understand the Scriptures, or else you know one of the impediments thrown in the way of what I am now stating, that it is never, too late while we are on this side of the grave. Whatever you have been, if you have been the most profligate character that ever lived; whether you have equaled Manasseh, Saul of Tarsus, the thief on the cross, or any other; if God bless you with a sight and sense of what you are as a sinner, and you begin to pray, it is not too late. The impediment thrown in the way is the notion, everywhere, I believe, stereotyped, called the unpardonable sin. But to understand that, you must read my sermon upon it, which is in print. And don't begin it with a determination to believe I am wrong, because you will never prove it. You read that sermon through carefully, those of you who have not read it, and I think you will be satisfied, when you arrive at the end of that sermon, that there is no such thing in the Bible as an unpardonable sin, except those sins God is not pleased to pardon. Now I have met with persons who have said, "Ah, sir, I feel I could pray to God, I feel I could have a hope in Christ, but nothing possesses my mind but that I have committed the unpardonable sin, can you tell me what it means?" My answer is, "No." Ah, but the Savior says, "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." I must again direct you to my sermon in print, I cannot enter into the question now. There are as many opinions about what the unpardonable sin is, as there are days in the year, and all the time men will hold that stereotyped false notion, they will be in the dark about the matter. I answer, therefore, commit what sin you have, you have not committed a sin that is unpardonable. You, a worm of the earth, you commit a sin that God Almighty could not manage? You, you, a poor moth, will you; you, an autumnal leaf, you; you, a piece of stubble, you; you, a mere nothing, you; you perpetrate a deed that the omnipotence of the blood of Immanuel could not wash away the stain of? I should be ashamed to hold such a doctrine concerning the blood of Christ, the blood of an incarnate God. I will not give up the assurance till I give up my breath, and I am sure I shall not then, that whatever excellency there is in the person of Christ, there is that in the atonement of Christ; and if there be omnipotence in his power, then there is omnipotence in that atonement. When I preached that sermon, several said, "I don't see with you. You see with me! you didn't see at all. You didn't like it, and so didn't listen to it I asked you to peep through the telescope, and I put the telescope right, and pointed out the objects in the heavens, and you refused to, look at them. Then you turned around, and said, "I don't see with you." No, you did not, because you would not look through the telescope." These are things in which angels reprove

some of us, for angel's desire to look into these, things, and you may depend upon it that these difficult parts, appearing difficult, they will all repay your labor to look into them. Now then, I hold that Esau represents, in the first place, the man that is in hell, that would possess the blessing, have the blessing, but now he is in hell, he is rejected; he is rejected because he is in hell; there is no hope there. But all the time a man is a living man, there is hope. If I were called upon today or tomorrow to visit a man a hundred and fifty years old, or a thousand years old, if he had done nothing but sin with all his might, and main, and power, all his days, if I could see in that man a conviction of his state, a conviction of his need of Christ, a conviction of his need of the mercy of God, I should no more despair of that man than I should of the salvation of an infant. Such is my view of the power of Immanuel to save. He saves by an arm almighty; he saves by atonement infinite in power, eternal in duration, swallows up death in victory. Is there anything too hard for our incarnate God? There is a great deal of pride among men. They sometimes say, Ah, you will sin the day of grace away. Where do you get that from? You may get it from your creed; but you do not get it from your Bible. You sin the day of grace away! you poor little moth; got that notion, have you? They do not care what they boast about if they can but boast; if they can but hold some sort of notion that implies an inability in God to carry out his counsels, an inability in Christ to save, an inability in the Holy Ghost, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, to regenerate the heart. If they can in any respect bring God into bondage, then the creature becomes very important. But let the whole be thrown to Paul's dung heap, throw the whole of it away, and let your confidence in Christ's ability be unbounded. Peter was taught a lesson upon this when he saw his congregation in their unconverted state; wild beasts, four-footed beasts, fowls of the air, creeping things. Well, what is the good of preaching to these? Why, grace surely can never turn these wretches, these abominable animals, into saints! But it did, it did do so, and does do so, and will do so. Thus, then, what a mercy it is to have a praying heart before we die, to have a believing heart before we die, and ere we lift up our eyes in hell to be made while here to lift up our eyes to the hills, whence alone salvation can come!

The second character which Esau represents is the man that would inherit the blessing, that sincerely seeks to inherit the blessing, that seeks it with agonies of mind, that seeks it with tears, that seeks it night and day, and that seeks it with as much earnestness as any man can ever seek he seeks it not after the due order; that is the reason. "Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Now we showed last Lord's day morning that the priesthood in the family was Esau's birthright. To despise his birthright, therefore, was to despise the priesthood. You may wish to go to heaven, you may wish to have eternal life, you may search the Scriptures, and in them think you have eternal life; but if you are wrong concerning the priesthood of Christ, you may seek, and seek, and seek for ten thousand years, but you will never get the blessing. Therefore, Esau represents those that seek the Lord un-scripturally, and that with all their earnestness, with all their tears, and all their concern, they cannot for the life of them admit the truth of Christ's priesthood, not in what it has really done. Where is the law maintained in truth and integrity? In Christ. Where is the gospel, or the new covenant, maintained in truth and integrity? In Christ. Now then, if you are taught of God, you will be led to see what Jesus Christ has done. And unless you receive him in the eternity of his perfection, you will never get the blessing. And so, it is impossible for you to get the blessing on Wesleyan grounds. The Wesleyan admits that some are in hell for whom Christ died: that is a denial of the perfection of his priesthood. And the duty-faith man is just the same; they tell us thousands are in hell that, might have been in heaven. If you are wrong, therefore concerning Christ's perfection, you will never get the blessing. Esau represents those that have

sought, and do seek, and that earnestly. Think you that Roman Catholics, thousands of them, out of the millions that belong to that delusive communion, are not sincere? They are; but they have no true knowledge of what Christ has done. Think you that there are no other sects and parties that are sincere? There are; but there is no real falling in with the eternal perfection of Christ; they despise it, they call it Antinomianism, high doctrine, and say they are sick of hearing “the truth, the truth, the truth”<sup>1</sup> that the Christian delights in. Cain was one of these; he sought; but in the wrong way. Esau sought, but the birthright was gone, the priesthood was gone; therefore, you cannot come into the blessing. The Jews sought, but never obtained; and thousands upon thousands now are seeking, but will never, no, never obtain. Now then, as the priesthood was the birthright, notice that, this is one of the principles upon which Esau was rejected; first, because he sought it not by faith in the sacrificial perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, I defy you to prove an instance, all through the Scriptures, of any man being brought to receive, in the understanding and love thereof, the perfection of Christ’s priesthood, and I that man being a lost man at the last; there is not an instance of it. Some hold the doctrine of Christ’s substitution as a mere notion; they infer that we do the same; but they are out, and beside the mark, here. I hold the priesthood of Christ as a mere notion! No; it is more precious to my soul than language can describe, I hold the priesthood of Christ as a mere notion! By it I have access to God; by it I find my way into the souls of men that are dead, and instrumentally administer eternal life; by it I find my way into the soul of the mourner, and give him beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning; by it I find my way into the guilty conscience, and instrumentally take that guilt away, and leave in the place thereof a heart full of love, a conscience full of peace. By it I have victory over the devil, victory over all my troubles; by it I have the shining of God’s presence, the operations of his Spirit, the immutability of his covenant, and it is more precious to my soul than language can describe. One more principle I have to name, upon which Esau was rejected; and it is this. There is an ambiguity in our translation; “he found no place of repentance.” That is an ambiguous expression, and does not certainly convey the proper meaning. To give the meaning clearly, without any ambiguity, it would read like this, that “he could not change his father Isaac’s mind, though he sought it carefully with tears.” Hence, when Isaac was astounded when Esau came, and said, “Where is he that has taken away your blessing?” Isaac immediately, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, said, “Yes, and he shall be blessed.” So that Esau could not change his father Isaac’s mind. So, how hard men labor to put us off with a changeable God; but they cannot change our Father’s mind, they cannot change his covenant, they cannot change his counsel, they cannot alter him. They may pray to the Lord to take away that dreadful doctrine of election; he never will. They may pray to the Lord to take away that dreadful doctrine of predestination; he never will take it away. They may pray to the Lord to banish from the earth those *hypers*, and we shall be all dear

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<sup>1</sup> As I noted in the previous sermon Wells is quoting C. H. Spurgeon in his sermon called “Noting but Leaves.” That is number 555 preached on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1864. In that sermon Spurgeon states that

I am sick of those cries of “the truth,” “the truth,” “the truth,” from men of rotten lives and unholy tempers. There is an orthodox as well as a heterodox road to hell, and the devil knows how to handle Calvinists quite as well as Arminians. No pale of any Church can insure salvation, no form of doctrine can guarantee to us eternal life. “Ye must be born again.” Ye must bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

There is a vast difference between Wells and Spurgeon on what the “truth” is as well as on its importance. Spurgeon is saying that Wells lived a rotten life, had an unholy temper, was on his way to hell and that he is sick of him and those who believe what he stood for: “the Truth”. Richard Schadle

universalists together; but the Lord never will. No, they will never be able to change God's mind. So that those very principles upon which these are rejected are the very principles upon which the people of God are received. First, we are received by the perfection of Christ's priesthood; secondly, we are received into and by an immutable covenant, Could not change his father Isaac's mind. I believe there are men now in England so sincere in their religion, they would give the world, if they had it to give, if they could but get rid of these doctrines, and get rid of these people; for, in their view, it spoils everything.

Thus, then, you see whom Esau represents. First, the man that when he comes into hell is too late then to seek for mercy. Secondly, the man that seeks the Lord in the wrong way, not taking with him the perfection of Christ's priesthood. And, third, for I might as well have made a third principle of it, the man who, would set aside God's immutable covenant, and put something else into the place thereof. What an infinite mercy, then, to be made to differ; to understand the blessing, to seek it in the right way! and so far from our wishing to change our Father's mind, we would not have any alteration; no, not for a million worlds. One of old said, in all the solemnities of death, "He has made with me an everlasting covenant," it would not be everlasting if it were changeable, "ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire, though he make it not to grow."