

Genesis Commentary - James Smith

GENESIS

Handfuls on Purpose
by James Smith, 1943

CREATION. Genesis 1.

"In the beginning God." Regeneration, like the work of creation, has its beginning in God (John 3:5). The new creation, like the old, begins with the "Word of God" and the moving of the Spirit. Compare the order here with the experience of a soul passing from death into life. Observe—

I. The State of Disorder (verse 2). The threefold condition of man's state by nature is here very forcibly suggested:

1. Confusion. "The earth was without form." No order; nothing in harmony with the ultimate purpose of God. No perfect thing. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Spiritual things foolishness.

2. Emptiness. "Void." Utterly unable of itself to produce any good. Life and fruitfulness are the gifts of God. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelled no good thing" (Romans 7:18). Man is utterly void apart from the moving Spirit. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4).

3. Darkness. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." There can be nothing but darkness until the light is sent forth. We would have been in darkness until now had not God commanded the light to shine forth (2 Corinthians 4:6). To be under sin is to be under the power of darkness. Satan is the Prince of Darkness.

II. The Work of the Spirit. "The Spirit moved." The earth may move, but its own motion could not mend it. It must be moved upon. Regeneration is not the outcome of the movements of the natural heart. Not evolution, but creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Born, not of the will of man, but of God; born from above (John 6:63).

III. The Power of God's Word. "God said, and there was." He spoke, and it was done. The Word of God is quick and powerful. This Word, this mighty, moving, re-creating energy is in the Gospel of Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation. "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). His Word was with power.

IV. The Divine Separation. "God divided the light from the darkness" (verses 4, 5). The Word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the "new man," divides between soul and spirit, and separates the spiritual and the carnal. "What communion has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

V. The Manner of Fruit bearing. "Yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself" (verse 11). Fruit bearing is the outcome of the light and the moving Spirit. The result of a condition, not an effort; of what we are, not of what we do. The fruit of Christ in us will be Christ-likeness—fruit after His kind, and with the seed in itself. Reproductive.

VI. The Position of the Lights. "In the firmament to give light upon the earth" (verse 15). The light must be above the earth if they are to shine on it. "You are the light of the world." Not of it—lifted above it. Seated in the heavenlies to shine upon it" (John 17).

VII. The Image of God. "God created man in His own image." The climax of His creative power results in His own likeness. It is so in the new creation, "After the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10). The great work of the Holy Spirit is to renew the soul after the image of God. Both God and man will be satisfied when we are perfected in His likeness.

VIII. The Crown of Honor. "God gave him dominion." Power and authority come when we have been made like Him. In the Kingdom we shall reign with Him (Rev. 20:6).

THE CREATOR'S SABBATH. Genesis 2.

Only when God had finished the heavens and the earth did He rest. He found no rest until He had ended all His work. The Sabbath, or rest of God, means perfect satisfaction in that which has been accomplished. He alone was the worker. His alone was the rest. Let us notice:

I. The Sabbath Ordained. The seventh day was fixed and settled by God to be a time of rest and joy to Himself and to all creation.

1. It is a Day of Rest. No more work to be done. He rested, not because He was weary, but because every good thing had been done that could be done.

2. It was a Day of Blessing. "God blessed it." The special favor and delight of God was in it—truthfulness and satisfaction.
3. It was a Separated Day. "God sanctified it." Set it apart as His own possession and inheritance because it manifested the results of His own wisdom, power, and goodness. But note more particularly that—
4. It was the Day of Grace for Man. God made man on the sixth day, so that the first day that dawned upon Adam was the Sabbath of God, that is, man immediately entered into the enjoyment of the rest of his Creator. God finished the work; man enters with Him into the rest and enjoyment of all that God had made. O the grace of God to delight in bringing man into such a possession!

II. The Sabbath Destroyed. It would seem that man did not long enjoy the rest of God. The tempter came, man failed the rest was broken, Adam fled from God. Sin ruined man for the enjoyment of God's rest. In the ages that follow man seems to have forgotten that the Sabbath was "made for man," so when the law was given (Exod. 22) the word "Remember" was significantly prefixed to the Second Commandment. The Sabbath of divine rest, which was a gift to man, now comes back to him in the form of law, but still it reminds him of God's rest. "No manna fell" on the Sabbath day. To enjoy rest now they have to gather double on the sixth day—not of grace now, out of works.

III. The Sabbath Restored. Through Jesus Christ man can be brought back to the enjoyment of God's rest.

1. Through Him another Work has been Finished. "I have finished the work" (John 17:4). He put away sin, the work of atonement is ended, and God has pronounced all very good.
2. Another Rest is Enjoyed. As God rested upon the mercy-seat on the Holy of Holies, so does He now rest satisfied in the work of His beloved Son.
3. Another Day of Grace is Proclaimed. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). As Adam entered into God's rest, so may we now through faith in Jesus. "There remained a rest (Sabbath) for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:1-9); "Enter into His rest." This rest means to us all that it meant to Adam: 1, A ceasing from works; 2, continual fellowship with God; 3, to bear His holy image; 4, to find our all in His possession; 5, to rejoice in God. "They could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

THE GARDEN OF EDEN. Genesis 2:8-19.

The garden in Eden speaks of grace upon grace. The man God made was invited to enter into and enjoy all the fullness of God. The garden may be regarded as a type of the provision God has made for man in Christ Jesus.

I. God's Gracious Provision. There is something in the fact that—

1. It was a Garden. This suggests a special enclosure, a place prepared for a prepared man. We are reminded of the Covenant made with Christ before the world was. He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).
2. It was Planted by the Lord. Man had no hand in the making of this inheritance. This, like the scheme of salvation, was the work of God: "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Both the "plant" and the planting were His alone (John 3:16).
3. It was Planted for Man. God had the good of man before Him in the planting of every tree. He considered all man's need, and made ample provision for his complete satisfaction. All the eternal forethought of God in our behalf is seen in the fullness that dwells in Christ. In Christ is God's provision for needy man. Look at some of these tree blessings:
 - (1) The Tree of Life. This stood in the midst of the garden (verse 9). Life is man's first need: "I am come that you might have life" (John 10:10). This was the tree of eternal life to Adam. The Cross of Christ in the midst is the tree of life for fallen man. Before Adam could die he had to be driven from the tree of life. To be without Christ is to be without hope.
 - (2) Every Tree that was Pleasant. Here also Adam found his pleasure. In God's provision for us in Christ there is life and every pleasant thing, every pleasure worth having—"Wisdom's ways."
 - (3) Every Tree that was Good for Food. There are many pleasures which don't satisfy; these are good for food. They build up and strengthen. Every promise of God is a fruit tree; the garden of the Lord is full of them.
 - (4) There was the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." Would it have been better without this? Here is a deep truth. We cannot know good and evil, in a real sense, until we have been planted into Christ. Sin and grace are well known there.
 - (5) There was a River of Water (verse 10). A river watered the garden. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" (Psalm 46:4). The blessings in Christ are all made fruitful by the power of the Holy Spirit. Surely in Christ we have a

goodly heritage.

II. Man's Wondrous Privilege.

1. He was Put in by God. "The Lord put the man into the garden" (verse 15). Adam was not made in the garden. Our engrafting into Christ is a divine act. The provision is much, but that is not enough. The soul of man, by the Holy Spirit, must be brought into touch with it.
2. He was Put in to Enjoy the Work of God. What grace! We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.
3. He was Put in to Work and Watch—dress it and keep it (verse 15). The Christian life, though a life of faith, is not a life of idleness.
4. He was Put in with a Divine Liberty and Warning (verses 16, 17). Shall we sin that grace may abound. God forbid! Sin may not cut off sonship, but it will destroy fellowship.

THE FIRST MARRIAGE. Genesis 2:18; 21-25.

God said, "Let Us make man in Our image." This first man we may regard as a type of the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven, who is the image of the Invisible God. Eve may represent the relationship of the redeemed to Christ: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Ephesians 5:32).

I. The Declaration. God said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (verse 18). God considers this man's highest need, and thinks that loneliness is not for his greatest good. Think of God away back in eternity saying this regarding the Son of His love! Not good for Him to be alone, the only Son, bearing the image and reflecting the glory of the Father! He will bring many sons into glory.

II. The New Creation. "I will make him an help meet for him" (verse 18). Eve was the workmanship of God, and His gift to the man in His own image. We are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. The Church is an help meet for Christ, is made by Him, and is the gift of the Father to the Son. "All that the Father has given Me shall come to Me" (John 6:37). "Them which You have given Me" (John 17:9).

III. The Operation. "The Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam" (verse 21). Sleep is the figure of death. While Adam was in this state the wonder-working hands of the Divine Operator brought forth a helper after His own likeness. It was a deep sleep the Lord God caused to fall upon the Second Adam when He bowed His head and gave up the Spirit. "It pleased the Lord to bruise" (Isaiah 53:10). God took a rib from the first man, but nothing less than the blood of the Second Man would suffice if a helpmate is to be given Him. His Church had to be bought with His own blood.

IV. The Presentation. "The Lord brought her to the man" (verse 23). Every Godlike man may have his wife from the Lord. "The Lord brought her to the man." What for? To share his love, to enjoy his fellowship, to be a partaker of the blessings freely given him by God, and to be a joy and a comfort and a help to him. Thus the Holy Spirit brings us to Christ, that we may receive of His, and be workers together with Him. Every Christian is to be a helpmate to Christ.

V. The Acceptance. "Adam said, This is now bone of my bones" (verse 23). He acknowledged Eve, the gift of God, as a part of himself. "They shall be one flesh." He never thought of refusing her. "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). How close the union! We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Yes, "He will receive you unto Himself."

VI. The Result. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (verse 24). Every relationship that would hinder us from cleaving to Christ and serving Him must be broken. The whole heart and life are to be yielded if we would be faithful. Christ left His Father when He came to earth. He left His mother when He died on the Cross. He cleaves to His wife and His redeemed people. Leave all, and cleave to Him (Matthew 16:24).

THE FALL OF MAN. Genesis 3.

The first sin was like Elijah's cloud, it was little at the beginning, but it blackened the whole heavens. By one man sin entered, and death came upon all. By Man (Christ) came also resurrection and life (1 Corinthians 15:21, 22). We have here the revelation of some root principles. There are:

I. Satanic Teaching. "You shall not surely die." The personality of the devil is clearly implied. He does not say "There is no God," but suggests that God does not mean what He says, or if He does He is not a God of mercy. His great purpose is ever to mar the design of God toward man. Wiles of the devil.

II. Carnal Reasoning (verse 6). She saw, because she looked, and, judging by appearance, she desired, and when the desire was nourished it grew into a deliberate act, she took. Then, not satisfied with taking for herself, she gave. The process may have been something like this: 1, Giving heed to the tempter; 2, forgetting God's mercies; 3, looking at the forbidden thing; 4, wishing God had not forbidden it; 5, doubting the Word of God; 6, believing Satan's lie; 7, yielding to taste.

III. Presumptuous Working. "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (verse 7). Their eyes were opened. Sin opens the eyes of the saints to see their own weakness, while it blinds the eyes of the ungodly. This is a vain attempt to cover sinful self. "He who covers his sins shall not prosper" (Proverbs 28:13). Why not confess and receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

IV. Guilty Concealing. "They hid themselves" (verse 8). Hid among the trees of the garden, among the very blessings God had given them. Many still hide behind the gifts of God while they live in sin. The "voice of the Lord" is always a terror to evil-doers. It is in vain for man to hide anywhere away from God. "I flee to You to hide me." Sin always separates from God.

V. Divine Seeking. "Where are you?" (verse 9). This is the call of Grace. God is always the first seeker. When would Adam have sought God? This divine question (1) Reveals great compassion; this is the Good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep. (2) It awakens conviction by leading to deep heart-searching. (3) It demands confession; yield, and unburden all to God. (4) It suggests judgment, "Where are you?" There is no escape from Him.

VI. Vain Excusing. "The woman You gave, she gave me" (verse 12). His mouth has not yet been stopped (Romans 3:19). God justifies the believer, not the boaster. If men don't now lay the blame of sin on God, they go as near as possible when they blame circumstances. There is no excuse for doubting God.

VII. Merciful Covering. "God made coats of skin and clothed them" (verse 21). Man's best will never cover his nakedness in the sight of God. These coats of skin suggest sacrifice. It is significant to remember that atonement means covering. Adam's covering was the covering of another, substitution. It was of God's making and giving, the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe.

CAIN AND ABEL. Genesis 4:1-16.

Of Cain and Abel it may be said: "Two men went up to worship, the one was a Pharisee, the other was a publican" (Luke 18:10). Although both enjoyed the same privileges and opportunities, they were far from being alike. Christian privileges will not in themselves make a Christian. We have here—

I. Self-will Rejected. "Unto Cain and his offering" God had not respect (verse 5). Cain must be acceptable first himself before his offering can be. His offering was rejected, because he himself was guilty. Christ was without spot when He offered Himself. The way of Cain was his own way (Jude 11). Man's own way is to seek acceptance with God without confessing guilt. There is no road this way; both the offerer and the offering are rejected.

II. Faith Accepted. "The Lord has respect unto Abel and his offering" (verse 4). "By faith Abel offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain" (Hebrews 11:4). The offering and the offerer stand or fall together. When by faith we lay hold upon Christ there is no possibility of rejection, for this offering has been accepted by God, and every believing offerer is accepted in Him. All that believe are justified from all things. Faith in Christ is always acceptable faith.

III. Enmity Manifested. "Cain was wroth" (verse 5). He was religious in appearance, but in heart he was at enmity with God. He had the form of godliness, but he was a stranger to its power. Many there are in these days who have gone the way of Cain, content with the mere ceremony, while the living substance has never been touched or tasted.

IV. Mercy Revealed. "God said, Why are you wroth? a sin-offering lies at your door" (verses 6, 7). God in mercy points out to Cain that the only way of acceptance as a sinner is through a sin-offering. Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. This sin-offering lies at the door of every sinner. What a mercy that the atoning price is so near 1

V. Righteousness Hated. "Cain slew his brother" (verse 8). And wherefore slew he him? (see 1 John 3:12). He hated the righteousness of God as seen in his brother. The carnal mind of man would rather quench the divine light in bloodshed than acknowledge sin. Christ was the Righteousness of God, and men cried, "Away with this Man" (Luke 23:18). They loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.

VI. Wickedness Judged. "Now are you cursed" (verse 11). The counsel of God with regard to the sin-offering was rejected; now the curse comes. What a striking fulfillment of John 3:18. Rejecting Christ as the sin-offering means no escape from the wrath and curse of God. What think you of Christ?

VII. Justice Vindicated. "Cain said, Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven" (verse 13, margin). He acknowledges the justice of his condemnation, yet so hardened is he who he begs not for mercy. "There is mercy at the eleventh hour," say many; but what if your heart becomes so hard that you will not even yield to seek mercy. The heart is desperately wicked; don't trust it. False worshipers, remember the doom of Cain.

NOAH SAVED FROM WRATH. Genesis 6:7.

In these chapters we have a dark, dismal picture of man. After about two thousand years' trial he is here only as a total failure. When man has altogether failed God comes in sovereign grace and manifests His saving power. It is always so. Grace comes when man is utterly lost and helpless. The coming forth of Noah and his family from the ark may be a foreshadowing of the coming of Christ and His saints to bless a new earth, purged by the judgment of God. Look at the—

I. Divine Verdict. "God said, The end of all flesh is come before Me" (chapter 6:13). What a poor end this was! "Evil, only evil, continually." Mark, this is the end of all flesh. Evolutionists predict a different end, but the divine verdict has already gone forth—"Only evil." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8). Unregenerate man, this is the end of your supposed good life, as seen by a righteous and holy God.

II. Divine Plan. "God said to Noah, Make an ark." Noah and his family could never have escaped the flood had not God been pleased to reveal this way of deliverance. It is not in man (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11). Salvation is of the Lord. What a revelation of grace has come to us through Jesus Christ! God laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

III. Divine Warning. "Behold, I, even I, will bring a flood" (verse 17). How gracious our God is in providing a Refuge for us in Christ, and in so plainly warning us of the coming wrath (Luke 3:7). There is no escape for those who neglect His merciful provision (Hebrews 2:3). "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).

IV. Divine Invitation. "Come you, and all your house, into the ark" (chapter 7:1). He who made the provision sends forth the invitation (Matthew 22:2, 3). He who gave His Son up to the death for us invites us to "hear Him." The pleading of Jesus is the pleading of God in Him (Matthew 9:28). God's gracious purpose is to save both you and your household (Acts 16:31).

V. Divine Security. "The Lord shut him in" (verse 16). They are safely kept whom God shuts up. When He shuts, no man can open. If any man enter in he shall be saved (John 10:9), kept (1 Peter 1:5), and comforted (John 14:16). To be shut in by God is to be shut out from the world—from its pleasures, its sins, and its doom. If your life is hid with Christ in God, seek those things which are above.

VI. Divine Carefulness. "God remembered Noah." Those who hide know where to seek. Those hidden by God are ever remembered by Him. All who are shut up in Jesus Christ, like Noah, are shut up to faith. It is a blessed privilege to be where we cannot be touched by judgment, and cannot be forgotten of God.

VII. Divine Commission. "God said unto Noah, Go forth" (chapter 8:16). We go in for salvation, and go forth for testimony. We are first taken out of the world before we are sent into it (John 17). Those who go in and out will find pasture. To the unsaved God's word is, "Come in;" to the saved His word is, "Go forth." Blessed coming and going!

THE ALTAR AND THE RAINBOW; OR, DEATH AND RESURRECTION GLORY. Genesis 8:20-21; 9:12-16.

There is a very close connection between the altar and the bow. The same connection exists between the death and resurrection of Christ. The altar speaks of sacrifice, the bow of promise and assurance. Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.

I. The Altar. It was an altar built unto the Lord. It was both a witness and a confession that God had holy and righteous claims that must be acknowledged and met. The first thing that Noah did in coming forth was to recognize that God's place was the first place. "In the beginning God."

1. The Need of an Offering. A new beginning was now to be made. If the life is to be a blessed and fruitful one the favor of God must be secured. In the fullness of time the Son of God stepped forth. A new order of things was about to begin. He made peace by the blood of His Cross. By His offering we are reconciled to God. This is a good start.

2. The Nature of the Offering. "Every clean beast." Every clean beast means the combination of every creature excellency. A perfect offering. When Christ offered Himself a sacrifice unto God it was an offering without spot or blemish. Although the first man failed, God found in the second every heart-satisfying virtue.

3. The Result of the Offering. God found in it: 1, A savor of rest (verse 21, margin). Precious thought! Every desire of God's heart

fully met in the sweet savor of Christ's offering (Ephesians 5:2). 2, An assurance of safety. No more curse. There is, therefore, now no judgment. Never come into condemnation. 3, The promise of unceasing blessing (verse 22). Every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3).

II. The Bow. The bow of promise comes after the altar of sacrifice. As all the colors of nature are in the bow, so all the promises of God are in Christ. Every divine perfection is manifested in the resurrection glory of Jesus. Christ as our Sacrifice is seen on the altar of the Cross; Christ as our Intercessor is seen in the bow of His mediatorial glory. The bow is—

1. A Token of God's Goodness. How kind of God to give such a visible expression of His love and favor, such an assurance of heart. If Christ is not risen we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen (1 Corinthians 15:17-20).

2. A Token of God's Fullness. There is fullness of color and beauty in the bow, a fullness that is in sweetest harmony. Think of the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ, in Him for us, and all in perfect harmony with a just and holy God. O the riches of His glorious grace!

3. A Token of God's Faithfulness. "I do set My bow for a covenant" (chapter 9:13). The setting of Christ at God's right hand is to us who believe a token of eternal security. He is faithful who has promised. "Do you believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35).

THE TOWER OF BABEL. Genesis 11:1-9.

There are seven interesting points of contrast between this scene and the one recorded in Acts 1. The gift of new tongues by the Holy Spirit is the divine remedy for the pride that results in the strife of tongues. We have here—

I. A Revelation of Human Ambition. "Out of the heart are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). A straw may indicate which way the wind blows. Observe—

1. The Object in View. "Let us make us a name." The natural man seeks a name for himself, and one of his own making. Name-making is a very common and popular business, although it never pays well in the end. See the failure of three name-makers in Numbers 16. It is possible to be doing Christian work with the same end in view.

2. The Method Employed. "Let us build a city and a tower." This purpose of theirs betrays a felt need of protection, abiding fellowship, and future prospect. Every man needs a city of safety and a tower of hope. The self-righteous seek to build them for themselves. "Going about to establish their own righteousness" (Romans 10:3). Thank God, Jesus Christ has built such a city and tower where all may have salvation and hope.

3. The Means Used. "Let us make brick." Those who would save themselves by their own works have much to do. They have not only the building, but the very bricks to make. Not only to do good works, but they have the very desires to manufacture (a hard task), and, after all is done, it is only brick at the best. In Luke 18:11, 12 we see one of these brick-makers busy at work.

II. A Manifestation of Divine Displeasure. What will all our building do for us if it does not please God? It is only wood, hay, stubble—fit for the fire.

1. The Divine Inspection. "The Lord came down to see what they had built." Every man's work will be tried. This is a very solemn truth. The eyes of Jehovah will scan every brick or jewel. Every motive and act alike must be tested. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

2. The Sudden Confusion. "The Lord did there confound, so they left off to build." What a change when God comes! When the Spirit of God comes upon the self-righteous He makes them leave off their vain and presumptuous works. Think of it. The presence of God means confusion to the religious self-seeker. What may be very pleasing in the eyes of men may be suddenly turned into Babel at the approach of God. "He who believes on Him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:6).

3. Complete Dispersion. "From thence did the Lord scatter them abroad." The very thing they were laboring to prevent was the thing that came upon them. Proud men labor to save themselves from being cast out by God at last, and their faithless works are securing for them the doom they strive to avoid. The city of God, seek you it (Hebrews 11:10). The name of the Lord is a strong tower; flee unto it (Proverbs 18:10).

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM. Genesis 12:1-4.

The life of Abraham, like the course of a river, had many windings, but it seemed to deepen and gather in strength as it went on. No Old Testament saint figures more prominently in the New Testament. A life of faith in God will always be fragrant for good.

I. When the Call Came. It came while he was living in ignorance and idolatry (Romans 4:10). He was not called because he was better than his countrymen. The grace of God seeks for no worthiness. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

II. How the Call Came. Whether he heard an audible voice, or whether the Spirit of God whispered the message into his heart by working in him an irresistible desire we know not. At any rate, the call was very personal. He alone could answer it. The calling of God brings individual responsibility. God calls us not that we may be better than our neighbors, but better than ourselves. God's saving call comes to us through the Gospel.

III. What this Call Involves.

1. An Entire Separation. "Get you out." His country, kindred, or father's house must not hinder. Every connection and friendship that stood between him and the divine call must be broken and left behind. If a man is not willing to forsake his sins he is not willing to be saved (Isaiah 55:7).

2. A New Life. This life is a life of faith in God and fellowship with God—a blessed life. All who obey God live by faith. It is the transplanting by the Spirit out of the barren soil of self into the fat, fruitful soil of infinite grace.

IV. What Accompanies this Call.

1. The Promise of a Possession. "A land that I will show you." Many linger when God calls, thinking of what might have to be given up, forgetful of what God offers. The Prodigal had, of course, to give up his rags when he got the best robe.

2. The Promise of Being Made a Blessing. "I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing." All the families of the earth are being and will yet be blessed through Abraham's seed (Christ). We can only be a blessing for God after we have been blessed by God. This is God's order. We are saved to serve. It is out of those who come to Jesus and drink that the living water flows (John 7:37, 38).

V. How the Call was Received. It would seem from chapter 11:31 that Abraham was led by his father instead of the command of God. Under his leadership he only got to Haran. After his father's death Abram fully obeyed (verse 4). Worldly wisdom will never help us in the life of faith. There is no rest or blessing for those who stop short of Christ, no matter how far they may have gone. Not far from the kingdom is still outside. Almost saved means lost. "God is calling yet. O hear Him!"

ABRAHAM IN CANAAN. Genesis 12:4-9.

Perhaps Terah, the father of Abraham, was seeking only his own comfort when he called a halt at Haran. In such a spirit the Land of Promise can never be possessed. There must be a crossing of the river (Euphrates) and a passing into the desert if Canaan is to be enjoyed. Half-and-half Christians who abide on the border never inherit the fullness of the land (Joshua 1:3).

I. A Prosperous Journey. "They went forth to go to Canaan, and into Canaan they came." The life of faith is always a life of going forth. "A going on still" (verse 9).

1. The Start. "They went forth." What from? From all the past sins and failures, from worldly pleasures, from self-ease, and self-seeking. What on? On the sure word of God's unfailing promise, not leaning on their own feelings, wisdom, or understanding. "He went out, not knowing where he went."

2. The Journey. The way lay through the Syrian desert. The passage into the place of blessing may be extremely trying to flesh and blood, the way to the Cross may be sorrowful, but the burden rolls off when there. The entrance into the fullness of the blessing is always through the barren desert of self-despair.

3. The End. "Into Canaan they came." Those who go out in the expectation of faith will not stick in the mud of disappointment. There are two great and common causes of failure in the Christian life. First, stopping short of the purpose and promise of God; second, going without the divine promise. Going forth in the energy of the flesh, having no special call of God to lean on. So when the heat of temptation comes they wither, having no root.

II. A Continual Difficulty. "The Canaanite was then in the land" (verse 6). Canaan is not a type of Heaven, for there will be no enemy there. It is typical of the new relationships into which believers enter after having trusted God, and gone forth in His Name. Here we have trial and warfare, and as pilgrims and strangers have need of continual faith. Being in the place of warfare, we are in the place where God has promised to bless. Abraham got no blessing while among his own kindred (verse 1). It is in the high places of promise that we wrestle against principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12).

III. An Unfailing Assurance. "The Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, 'Unto your seed will I give this land'" (verse 7). The assuring

promise was given when Abram had got right into the center of the land. When by faith we take our stand right upon His Word, then shall we find it sweetly fulfilled in our experience. The center of God's promises is in Christ. We shall come short until we are found in Him. "All the promises of God are in Him" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Go forth, believer, into the heart and center of all God's purposes in Christ. You will find grace sufficient there. The anxious soul must get to this center before the assurance of salvation will be given. The sealing comes upon believing (Ephesians 1:13).

IV. A Powerful Testimony. "He pitched his tent, and built an altar unto the Lord" (verse 8). Abram's great mission in Canaan was that of a witness for God. His altar was a public testimony. To this end is every Christian called. "You shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). By his tent he declared himself a pilgrim and a stranger, looking for a city; by His altar he testified to

1. His Faith in the Reality of God. While the Canaanite looked on he must have been convinced that Abram believed in a living, personal, prayer-hearing God.
2. His Belief in the Holiness of God. The altar speaks of sacrifice. God is holy, and can only be approached through atoning blood. Does our lives bear this much-needed testimony? Do we by our acts condemn the world? (Hebrews 11:7).
3. His Confidence in the Faithfulness of God. He was not ashamed to lift up his altar in the presence of the heathen, declaring thereby his expectation of the fulfillment of the divine promise. How often are we afraid to venture much for God, lest He should fail and our confidence stagger.
4. His Surrender to the Claims of God. All who really know the need and meaning of the altar will gladly yield up all to Him. May our lives be lived in the light of that awful altar and sacrifice lifted up on Calvary. Yield yourselves unto God.

ABRAHAM IN EGYPT. Genesis 20:10-18; 13:1-4.

In the spiritual world of our Christian experience, as well as in the natural world, changes may come very suddenly. Who would have thought that a man with Abraham's faith would turn aside at the first temptation. At our best and strongest moment we are in danger of falling, if not kept by the power of God through faith.

I. The Trial. "There was a famine in the land." It is always a great trial to experience drought and lack of pasture in the Land of Promise. But if faith is to triumph and grow it must be tested. "The trial of your faith is precious" (1 Peter 1:7). Well-watered plains please the eye. Faith must lay hold on the things which are unseen. It is often in the place of blessing where the keenest pangs of thirst are felt. Trials make the promise sweet; there is no discipline of soul without them.

II. The Failure. "He went down into Egypt" (verse 10). Why? Had God failed? Ah, no! But it seems to have happened to Abraham as it often turns out in our own experience. He had been trusting more to the land than to the God of promise; looking more to the blessing than the Blessor. This God will not permit. Our faith must not rest on His gifts, but on Himself. Note what this downward step led to.

1. It Led to Fear (verse 12). He was now afraid they would take his life. His courage for God is gone. None are so weak and silly as Christians when turned aside from the life of faith.
2. It Led to Selfishness (verses 11 and 12). He is more concerned about his own safety than the honor and chastity of his wife. When a man turns away from God his interest is sure to become centered in himself.
3. It Led to Hypocrisy (verse 13). He pretended to be what he was not, only the brother of Sarai. This was a deliberate misrepresentation. This is the next step of the backslider, pretending not to be what he really is.
4. It Led to Open Rebuke. Pharaoh said to him, "What is this that you have done?" (verse 18). It is sad when the child of God has to be warned and corrected by the man of the world.
5. It Led to Trouble upon Others. "The Lord plagued Pharaoh because of Abraham's wife" (verse 17). The plague of divine judgment will doubtless need to fall upon many because of the unfaithfulness of many of God's believing people. May our light so shine that they will be led to glorify our Father in Heaven.

III. The Restoration. "Abraham went up out of Egypt, and came unto the place of the altar which he had made at the first" (chapter 13:1-4). It has been said that "the man of God makes but a poor worldling." Abraham built no altar in Egypt. There is no fellowship with God while we walk by sight and not by faith. The only remedy for backsliding is to come again to the place of the altar, the Cross of Christ. This is the place of sacrifice, forgiveness communion, and consecration. There was no happiness nor restoration for the prodigal until he came back to the place from whence he had wandered away (Luke 15). "You have forsaken Me," says the Lord. "Return unto Me, and I will heal your backslidings."

ABRAHAM, THE SEPARATED ONE. Genesis 13:5-18.

Abraham and Lot are types of two classes of Christians. Lot was a righteous man, but, living by sight and sense, he sought only his own pleasure and profit. He is the type of an unconsecrated Christian. Abraham lives by faith on the promise of God. He may fail, but not like Lot, who never could do anything to help Abraham. Lot built no altar. The unconsecrated life can live without worship. The well-watered plains have more attraction for the worldly believer. The "higher Christian life" just means higher motives in living.

I. The Impossible Relationship. "The land was not able to bear them" (verse 6). The conditions of the country would not permit of Abram and Lot dwelling together. Even the Land of Promise is not able to sustain such an unequal yoke as the life of faith in God and the life of sense and worldly wisdom. This is a strife that often takes place in the heart of the believer, a conflict between the fleshly life and the spiritual. As long as the strife goes on the Land of Promise seems to yield no blessing (see Romans 7). Worldly Christians, like Lot, set no value on the promises of God.

II. The Generosity of Faith. "Abram said to Lot, The whole land is before you; separate yourself" (verses 8 and 9). The friend of God can easily afford to let others have the first choice. Either hand will do for the man of God. The servant of God must not strive. We can show our trust in God by standing back from the strife of tongues, and by allowing others to occupy the chief seats. Let us stand up for God, and God will stand up for our rights. All our rights are in Him.

III. The Selfishness of the Worldly-Minded. "Lot lifted up his eyes" (verses 10-13). He looked for the best, and chose it, and never said "Thank you." He separated himself from the man of faith with a light heart. Worldly Christians do not set much value on the fellowship of a holy man. His mind was set on earthly prosperity, not on heavenly things. How much did he gain by it? He pitched his tent (no altar) toward Sodom, and was burned out of it himself, saved as by fire.

IV. The Privilege of the Separated. "The Lord said unto Abram, after Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes" (verse 14). After the separation comes the message of comfort, "Come out from among them.... and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17). Greed and covetousness constrained Lot to lift up his eyes. Abram lifted up his eyes at the invitation of the Lord. Herein lies the great distinction between the worldly Christian and the faithful one. The one is moved by self-interest, the other by the Word of God. "Looking up" is the abiding attitude of every separated one. Lot goes leaning on his own understanding. Abram goes leaning on the promise of God (see Galatians 2:20).

V. The Altar of Testimony. "Abram came to the plain of Mamre and built there an altar unto the Lord" (verse 18). Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom; Abram pitched his toward God. The self-seeking Christian bears no testimony for God. When he does attempt it, it looks like mockery (Genesis 19:14). The just shall live by faith. Live to the will of God (1 Peter 4:1, 2).

ABRAHAM, THE MAN OF FAITH. Genesis 14:18-24.

God called Abram, and he went out, not knowing where he went. Lot went with him. Lot followed Abram, and Abram followed God. Lot is soon found dwelling in Sodom. Now we see him as a captive. Worldliness is sure to lead to spiritual bondage. Abram's character shines out here as—

I. A Man of Sympathy. "They came and told Abram that his brother was taken captive" (verses 13 and 14). Think of what he might have said: "He has himself to blame. Serve him right; he should not have gone into Sodom." Just the wages of worldliness. But not so. He at once bestirs himself to seek his deliverance. Those who walk in fellowship with God cannot remain indifferent to the sufferings and sorrows of their brethren.

II. A Man of Courage (verses 14 and 15). With his handful of servants he goes forth against the four kings. The man of faith attempts great things. He knows that God can use weak things to confound the mighty. Abram's faith worked by love. He loved his brother Lot, and dared to do this great deed. Great faith constrains to attempt what seems impossible. Think of Nehemiah, of Moses, and of Paul (Philippians 4:13).

III. A Man of Power. "He brought back all" (verse 16). Abram, as a separated man, dwelt in the presence of God. He went to battle as one who had come out from the holy, soul-inspiring presence. The victory is complete. Lot mingled with the ungodly, and he could not even save himself. It is the separated one alone who is able to save others. Abram's power lay in his life of faith. If we would have victory for God, then we must be separated unto God. Remember where and how Samson failed (Judges 16). The fruitful branch must abide in the vine.

IV. A Man of Independence. "I will not take anything that is your" (verse 23). Abram took all he could get from the King of Salem, because he was the priest of the Most High God; but he would take nothing from the King of Sodom, lest he should say, "I have

made Abram rich." God had enriched him, and he would take nothing likely to hinder Him from having all the honor. This is not the independence of pride and self-sufficiency, but that of a holy jealousy for the Name and character of God. It is the independence of entire dependence upon God alone. May our hearts be stirred up to the exercise of it. "The LORD is the portion of His people" (Deuteronomy 32:9).

V. A Man Approved of God. "Melchizedek met him and blessed him" (verses 18 and 19). He also refreshed him with "bread and wine." Jesus Christ, the Priest of the Most High God, will so bless and refresh all who, like Abram, go forth in His Name to walk, to work, and to war. What a privilege to meet the Blessing Priest when returning faint and weary from the struggle of faith! Many a battle the separated man of God will need to fight on behalf of others, but Jesus, the supporting King of Peace, will meet him with His help and blessing, and at last with His "Well done," which brings eternal blessing.

ABRAHAM ENCOURAGED. Genesis 15:1-6.

A word in season; how good it is! God's words are always in season. He knows how to speak a word to them that are weary. His consolations are neither few nor small.

I. The Time. "After these things the Word of the Lord came to Abram." After the battle and rescue of Lot from the hands of the four kings. It is no unusual experience for the man of God to tremble, even after a great victory has been gained. The achievements of faith never bring self-confidence. Abram may have feared the return of the kings with renewed force; he may have been vexing his soul at refusing the gifts of the King of Sodom; but God's "Fear not; I am your reward," would be a word lull of consolation and comfort. Let us look at—

II. The Message. This message contains—

1. A Revelation of God's Love. "Fear not." This is the language of One who, in love and grace, had considered all his need. Jesus said, "Give you them to eat," for "He Himself knew what He would do" (John 6:6). This message reminds us of the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. Fear not; He who gave His Son for us, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

2. A Revelation of God's Power. "I am your shield." The Omnipotent, Personal God declares Himself as the protection of the man who walks by faith. God is our refuge. Your life is hid with Christ in God. I am your shield. Christ shelters from sin by the shield of His Blood (Exodus 12:13). Christ shelters the weak and faltering with the shield of His intercession (Luke 22:32).

3. A Revelation of God's Fullness. "I am your exceeding great reward." It is still the desire and delight of God that His people should be satisfied with HIMSELF. The great ultimate purpose of the incarnation is that the believing soul should be rewarded with the revelation of God. These unsearchable riches are in Christ for us now. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. The greatest reward God can bestow upon us is a fuller and better acquaintance with Himself. For this the Holy Spirit has been given, that He might take the things of Christ and show them to us. This precious promise was given to Abram after he had refused the unhallowed gifts of the King of Sodom (Genesis 14:23). Every sacrifice for Christ's sake will bring exceeding great reward.

III. The Result. "He believed in the Lord" (verse 6). This is very beautiful. He accepted God's gracious message, and rested calmly on His Word, and we read, "And God counted it to Him for righteousness." His was the righteousness, not of works, but of faith (Romans 4:3). Faith in God has always a transforming power. God justifies the believer in Jesus. He counts, or reckons, them righteous. Who shall condemn whom God counts righteous? This believing in the Lord implies the entire surrender of ourselves unto God, that He may work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

ABRAHAM WALKING BEFORE GOD. Genesis 17:1-5.

Abram was ninety-and-nine years old when the Lord appeared unto him. Not too old to have fellowship with Him. Age may shut us out from the joys and companionships of youth, but through grace it may ripen our friendship with God.

I. The Revelation. "I am the Almighty. I am God all-sufficient." This is a divine plaster large enough to cover any human sore. A son had been promised Abram; he was now old, and no son had yet been given to him; but in this promise he had enough to brighten faith and trim afresh the flickering lamp of hope. This revelation of God, as our all-sufficiency, is made known to us in Jesus Christ. There is enough in Him to meet all our need, both as sinners and as servants. Weary, downcast Christian toilers, hear Him say, "Look unto Me; I am God all-sufficient." To brighten your little dwelling there is plenty of light in this sun; to float your little vessel there is plenty of water in this ocean.

II. The Commission. "Walk before Me, and be you perfect." Perhaps Abram had been walking too much before Sarah. Seeking to

please her, guided by her counsel, he had already turned aside from the life of faith in God (chapter 16:1-4). This was a call—

1. That Affected His Life. "Walk before Me." In all things he was to act as one who lived in the immediate presence of God Almighty. This is not a life of dread and awkward restraint, but a holy, joyful, divinely-satisfied life. It is, in fact, the life of faith. This is the high privilege of every Heaven-born son of God.

2. It Affected His Character. "Be you perfect." That is, be whole-hearted. Not having a double heart (Psalm 12:2), seeking to please both God and man. All perfection comes from Him who alone is perfect. The highest human perfection lies in a whole-hearted life before God.

III. The Submission. "And Abram fell on his face" (verse 3). The best answer to God's high calling is a humble and broken spirit. Abram did not say boastfully, like some of his descendants, "All that you say will we do" (Ruth 3:5). He bowed his face to the dust, and "God talked with him." A deep, conscious sense of ignorance and weakness brings us into the right attitude to be taught of God. God always talks to the heart of the self-abased. When John fell at His feet he felt the touch of His gracious hand, and heard His comforting "Fear not" (Rev. 1:17). May He give us that humbleness of heart, that calmness of spirit that bears the faintest whisper from the lips of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The Transformation. "Neither shall your name any more be called Abram; but your name shall be called Abraham." Abram, the exalted, is changed into Abraham, the fruitful. He has bowed with his whole heart unto the will of God, and his character is transformed. It is not always so? Complete surrender brings a complete change of nature. Jacob became a prince, and prevailed when he yielded entirely to the heavenly wrestler. It is when we are crucified with Christ that Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). It is by yielding to the Spirit of Christ that we are transformed into His holy and heavenly image.

ABRAHAM RECEIVING AND SERVING. Genesis 18:1-17.

Every Old Testament incident yields some New Testament truth. Let us read this portion in the light of the New Revelation.

I. A Gracious Visit. "The Lord appeared unto him; . . . and he lift up his eyes, and, lo, three men stood by him" (verses 1 and 2). This is striking language, that Jehovah should manifest Himself in the form of three. Does this not suggest the Trinity of the Godhead? The whole Trinity is interested and exercised in seeking to bless and save man. The Father loved, and sent His Son; the Son loved, and gave Himself up to the death to redeem; the Spirit loved, and came to make His abode in the believing heart. This threefold salvation is summed up in the blessing, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

II. A Hearty Reception. The manner in which Abraham received the visitors, and his various acts toward them, may serve us as an illustration of how a weary, longing soul may receive Jesus, and be drawn out in eagerness after Him.

1. There was a Longing Desire. "He lift up his eyes and looked" (verse 2). A good work has been wrought in us before we will even lift up our eyes. The Lord is sure to appear in grace to the looking ones. They looked, and were lightened.

2. There was a Ready Mind. "He ran to meet them." He was in haste to receive the visitors. When the heart is really hungering for the living bread it will receive it gladly. The soul that is sighing for Christ will hasten to Him.

3. There was a Humble Spirit. "He bowed himself toward the ground." The more closely we come to Jesus, the heavenly Visitor, the more unworthy do we see ourselves to be. The way to God is a self-humbling way. The nearer we come to His light the more unseemly does the garments of our own righteousness appear.

4. There was a Willing Confession. Abraham said, "My Lord." When a soul has found its way into the presence of Jesus Christ we expect to hear the language of confession and testimony. "My Lord!" These two little words imply two great thoughts—(1) appropriation; (2) entire subjection. He is mine and I am His.

5. There was a Love for Fellowship. "If I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray You, from Your servant" (verse 3). What could be more natural? The soul that has found the Lord yearns to abide in His presence. In His presence is fullness of joy. The lonely heart finds its home in the bosom of His love.

6. There was a Desire for their Refreshing. "Rest yourselves, . . . and comfort your hearts" (verses 4 and 5). In our selfishness we are apt to be satisfied with getting His favor and blessing, and stopping short of seeking rest for His soul and comfort for His heart. Christ gave us rest and comfort by giving Himself for us; let us give Him rest and comfort by giving ourselves to Him.

7. There was a Readiness to Serve. "Abraham ran and fetched and gave" (verses 6 and 7). Love lends swiftness to the willing feet. "The Lord loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). "The love

of Christ constrains us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

III. A Blessed Reward. "The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (verse 17). The devotion of Abraham is rewarded with a revelation of the secret purpose of the Lord. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. The way into the deeper things of God often lies through self-sacrifice and active service. If we would know the hidden wisdom of God, and feed on the finest of the wheat, we must lay ourselves and all that we have at the feet of our Lord. Open your heart to Him, and His heart will be open to you.

THE HISTORY OF LOT. Genesis 19.

The history of Lot is the history of a backslider. When he turned away from Abraham he turned aside from faith. When he sought the well-watered plains he was seeking his own glory. While seeking his own interest his testimony as a believer in the Lord was despised. Then came failure and flight, but being the Lord's he himself was saved as by fire, though all his works were burnt (1 Corinthians 3:14, 15). Look at the—

I. Choice He Made. "He chose the plain of Jordan, and pitched toward Sodom" (Genesis 13:10-12). Those who walk by sight and not by faith will always be influenced by appearances. The choice of Moses was the choice of faith (Hebrews 11:24, 25). If we follow the dictates of our own hearts we will be sure to pitch toward Sodom.

II. Position He Occupied. "Lot sat in the gate of Sodom." Having become a companion of the Sodomites, he now becomes a partner with them. When a Christian can find pleasure in the fellowship of the ungodly he will soon become a sharer of their iniquity. Worldly advancement is no evidence of growth in grace. Mixing with the world often means helping the ungodly (2 Chronicles 19:2).

III. Message He Received. "The Lord has sent us to destroy this place" (verse 13). Wicked places and wicked things must all be destroyed. If all your wicked things were destroyed would you lose anything? How would it affect your plans and purposes? If our heart interests are entangled with the wickedness of this world we will suffer loss. Set your affections on things above, then, when every wicked place is destroyed your inheritance will remain untouched.

IV. Testimony He Bore. "Lot went out and spoke unto his sons-in-law; . . . but he seemed as one that mocked" (verse 14). Our testimony for God will always be a mockery if we are living the selfish life. Who will believe that sin is bitter if we roll it under our tongue as a sweet morsel? Neither earnestness nor eloquence will make up for inconsistency. It is the life that is the light.

V. Reluctance He Showed. "While he lingered the men laid hold upon his hand" (verse 16). We are always slow to obey the call of God when our lives are entangled with the affairs of the world. The young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Matthew 19:22). Many perish in the full light of knowledge for lack of decision. Escape for your life—tarry not.

VI. Request He Offered. "Behold this city is near; let me escape to it" (verse 20). He thought the appointed mountain of refuge too far away. Why should he wish to be saved as near the city of doom as possible? Why should we wish to be saved, and nothing more? Is there not a lurking unwillingness in the minds of many of God's people to flee to the distant mountain of entire separation? Lot was saved, but he was still near enough the place of death to fill him with fear (verse 30).

VII. Favor He Enjoyed. "I cannot do anything until you be come to it" (verse 22). How precious even a poor backslider is to God! Judgment cannot fall on Sodom until he is outside. But think further how the presence of this worldly-minded believer among the ungodly was hindering God from carrying out His own purposes. Until he came out from among them the work of God was at a standstill.

A SOLEMN REFLECTION. Genesis 19:27, 28.

"Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord; and he looked toward Sodom;... and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." This was a sacred spot to him. Here the Lord met him, and here he made intercession for the righteous in Sodom. Now from this holy place he beholds the judgment of God. Those flame-girt columns of smoke declare the fulfillment of His word, and reveal His awful character when dealing in righteousness with sin and guilt. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). It is when we stand like Abraham in these high and heavenly places, walking by faith in fellowship with the Lord, and in the spirit of intercession, that we see and understand what a holy, sin-hating God we worship. As we in imagination stand with Abraham gazing on the fiery doom of Sodom, let us reflect on the—

I. Awfulness of Sin. It constrained the Lord to come down from Heaven to deal with it (chapter 18:20, 21). The cry of Israel in Egypt brought the Lord down to deliver. The cry of Sodom brought Him down to destroy. The cry of the world's need brought Jesus our Lord from Heaven that He might deal with it. When God comes in grace He deals with sin, putting it away by the sacrifice of Himself.

When He comes in judgment He deals with the sinner, putting him away. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

II. Certainty of Judgment. "We will destroy this place; . . . the smoke went up" (verses 13-28). A man might as well hope to escape from his own shadow as from guilt and punishment so long as his sins are unforgiven. The judgment of God may slumber, and guilt may lift up its haughty and defiant head; but (1) it is certain; (2) it may be sudden; (3) it will be complete.

III. Sovereignty of Grace. As Abraham looked with tear-filled eyes upon the smoke of perishing Sodom he might have asked himself, "Why am I not there? How have I been saved from it? Why was I called out of Ur? What better was I than many left in their sins?" The answer is, "By grace are you saved" (Ephesians 2:8).

IV. Security of Believers. "I can do nothing until you be come to it." "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. All who belong to Him are under a special providence. God said to Moses, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them" (Numbers 16:21). Before the flood came the righteous were shut up in the ark. Before the judgments are poured out on the earth the Church will be translated to Heaven. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

V. Importance of Witness-Bearing. The Sodomites, like the men of this world, were under condemnation, but believed it not. God has not left us in ignorance of our doom if we reject His Son. "He who believes not is condemned already" (John 3:18)

VI. Value of Present Opportunity. Soon our day of testimony will be over. Soon those among whom we live will be clothed in white robes before God, or enrapt up in the smoke of torment. Lot's twenty years in Sodom were fruitless to God. Now the day of his privilege is gone and his very companions perish in their sins. Behold, now is the accepted time both for salvation and service (see Jude 20-23).

HAGAR THE HELPLESS. Genesis 21:14-19.

"What ails you, Hagar?" Human ailments are very many, and may overtake us, as they did Hagar, in a very unexpected way. Who could be happier than she while nursing the son of Abraham? But the birth of Isaac (type of that which is born of the Spirit) brings trouble and separation to Ishmael (that which is born of the flesh). Poor Hagar, crushed in spirit, wanders forth into the wilderness, where, like the weary dove outside the ark, she is ready to perish, but the merciful hand of God is stretched out, and she is received into the favor of Him who seeks to save the lost. Notice—

I. Divine Question. God called, and said, "What ails you, Hagar?" (verse 17). How timely and tender is the sympathy of God! This is no formal question of curiosity, but the loving inquiry of One whose heart yearns to help the needy. When Jesus said, "What will you that I shall do unto you?" (Luke 18:41) He was opening the door into His own divine fullness. Hagar's ailment, in a typical sense, is a very common one.

1. She was an Outcast. "Cast out this bondwoman" (verse 10). "Abraham sent her away" (verse 14). She was shut out from the Master's house and presence. Why? Because her son mocked at Isaac—the gift of God. Those who were found sneering at the Word of Christ were all put outside, "And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise" (Luke 8:54). Sin always separates and leads from the house of blessing to the desert of sorrow and misery.

2. She was Destitute. "The water was spent in the bottle" (verse 15). The resources of an outcast are speedily exhausted. The prodigal's fortune was soon spent (Luke 15). When the sinner gets to an end of himself he has nothing left but prayer. His wit's end is often his best end. It is when all self-created streams are dried that the longing eye seeks the Living Fountain.

3. She was Helpless and Hopeless. "She went a good way off, and said, Let me not see the death of the child" (verse 16). She now sees nothing but the grim face of death before her. Her parting with the lad must have been like wringing the last drop of blood out of her agonizing heart. It is possible to see and feel the greatness of our needs, so that we are afraid to listen to their voice. Stifling their cry does not improve our condition. She is a true and painful picture of one who is "without strength." "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

II. Divine Word of Comfort. "The angel of God said, Fear not, for God has heard." What a beautiful fulfillment of "He knows how to speak a word in season to them that are weary" (Isaiah 50:4). Man's extremity is God's opportunity. It was "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The divine "Fear not" is always accompanied with the divine fullness (Isaiah 41:10).

1. The Provision. "She saw a well of water" (verse 19). She was sitting perishing in an agony of thirst while a well of salvation was close at hand. Spiritually this is the state and condition of many perishing for lack of knowledge while the Word of Truth is lying at their side, and even ringing in their ears.

2. The Preparation. "God opened her eyes." It was not enough that the well was there; her eyes must be opened to see it. The great provision of the Gospel is twofold: 1, The outward work of Christ on the Cross; 2, the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The well of atonement cannot satisfy without the eye-opening power of the Spirit of God. "Open You mine eyes" (Psalm 119:18).

3. The Acceptance. "She went and filled the bottle with water." She could not make the well, but she could take the water freely offered to her. We are not asked to make salvation, but to take it (Rev. 22:17). What a revelation this was to Hagar: 1, Of her own blindness. It was only when her eyes were opened that she discovered how blind she had been. 2, Of the goodness of God. He made the provision, and imparted to the needy one the very capacity to apprehend it. God opened her eyes, but she must fill the bottle. It is an awful responsibility to have the opened eye and yet to refuse the blessings revealed. In the Fountain opened for sin and impurity there is enough to fill every bottle to satisfy every heart.

4. The Result. "She gave the lad drink." In accepting the divine provision she saved both herself and her son. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house" (Acts 16:31).

THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM. Genesis 22:1-14.

He who is to be the father of the faithful has to face the father of all the trials of faith. We see the workings of great faith in the actions of Abraham.

(1) He reasoned not; he consulted no one.

(2) He staggered not under the crushing weight of such a demand.

(3) He was prompt; he rose up early in the morning.

(4) He was deliberate; preparing the wood beforehand.

(5) He was fully determined; bade the young men keep back that they might not hinder him. This is a very fruitful portion. Look at the —

I. Father's Sacrifice. "Take now your son." Think of the preciousness of this son. All the hopes and desires and affections of the father are centered in him. In offering up his son Abraham was giving up his all. He had absolutely nothing left but his God. Yet this is enough for faith. God gave up His Son, although all His affections and purposes were centered in Him. We can never understand the greatness of His sacrifice until we can understand the greatness of His love for His beloved Son. Like Abraham, in giving His Son He gave His all.

II. Son's Submission. It is significantly stated that "they went both of them together." In a deep and real sense this was true of Jesus Christ and His Father. In making an atonement for sin "they went both of them together." "I delight to do Your will, O my God" (Psalm 40:8). The purpose of the Father and of the Son was one. Like the Lord Jesus Christ, Isaac submitted—

1. To be Burdened. "Abraham took the wood and laid it upon Isaac, his son." What a burden in the eyes of the father! It was the cross of sacrifice, the symbol of death. What a picture of the only-begotten Son of God, with the burden of our iniquity laid upon Him, and laid on Him, too, by a loving Father! "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). He also submitted—

2. To be Bound. "He bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar." As a young man, twenty-five years of age, he might have resisted; but he, like our Isaac, was led as a lamb, he opened not his mouth. Love and devotion were the cords that bound the Son of God to the altar of sacrifice.

III. Sacrificial Requisites. Isaac carried the wood, while he himself was to be the burnt-offering; but let us not fail to observe what was in the father's hands.

1. The Fire. "Abraham took the fire in his hand." There is something awfully solemn about this. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). "Who shall dwell with devouring fire?" (Isaiah 33:14). Does not this suggest the holy, testing, consuming character of God when approaching the altar of expiation?

2. The Knife. "He took the fire and a knife." If the fire represents the holiness of God, then the knife may well symbolize the sword of justice. "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow" (Zechariah 13:7). The knife was quivering in the air when Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Psalm 22:1). In these days men are ready to forget that every sacrifice to God must have to do with the divine knife and fire.

3. The Altar. "Abraham built an altar." Isaac did not make the altar; it was prepared by the father. My soul, tread softly here. This was

solemn work for Abraham. In eternity God in His own heart and mind prepared the altar for Christ. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

4. The Cords with which Isaac was bound to the altar, typical of the nails which bound Christ to the Cross. Not the nails, but love bound the Savior. It was the love of the Father to the Son, the love of the Son to the Father, and the love of both to man—a threefold cord that is not easily broken.

IV. Doctrine of Substitution. "He took the ram and offered him in the stead of his son" (verse 13). The scene on Mount Moriah, as typical of the greater scene on Mount Calvary, could scarcely have been perfect without the thought of substitution being made prominent. The figure now changes. The ram becomes the burnt-offering, and the submissive one goes free. You observe this sacrifice was provided by God. We have still Jesus before us, not as the Son now, but as the Substitute of one condemned to die. Man found a Cross for Christ, but it was God who found the Ransom—"Jehovah-Jireh." "He spared not His own Son (like Abraham's), but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Ask Isaac, as he gazes on the ram burning in his stead, if he believes in substitution. "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

THE BRIDAL SEARCH. Genesis 24.

This is one of the most wonderful seed-plots in the whole field of Revelation. It is an epitome of the scheme of salvation, and an outline history of the Church of God. May our eyes be opened to behold these wondrous things. Here we may see—

I. Abraham; or, The Father's Purpose. "You shall go and take a wife unto my son Isaac" (verse 4). The thought of a bride for Isaac originated with the father. It was the outcome of his love for his son, and a desire to bring into great blessing one who was as yet a great way off. What a picture of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32). God the Father saw that it would be good for His Son to have a Bride with Him in the glory of His Father's presence. This purpose was declared, and the covenant made before the world was formed. The Church, as His Bride, was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. O the unsearchable riches of His grace! O the unfathomable depths of His kindness toward us!

II. Isaac; or, The Son and Heir. "Unto him has he given all that he has" (verse 36). Isaac, like Jesus, came into possession of his inheritance after passing through the bitterness of death (Genesis 22:9, 10). In the experience of both father and son Isaac virtually died and rose again. Now he becomes heir to all. Jesus Christ "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death;... wherefore God also has highly exalted Him" (Philippians 2:8, 9). Now it has "pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell" (Colossians 1:19). "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead" (Colossians 2:9). Unto Him has the Father given all that He has, that all the wants of His happy Bride may be fully satisfied. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He emptied Himself that He might get into touch with the poverty of His Bride. You are complete in Him.

III. Eliezer; or, The Spirit's Mission (Genesis 24:2). This old steward of the house of Abraham is a perfect type of the Holy Spirit.

1. He had Authority in the House. He looked after the domestic affairs of Abraham. The Spirit is One with the Father and the Son. He attended to the home affairs of this world (Genesis 1:2).

2. He was Sent by the Father. "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send" (John 14:26).

3. He was Sent in the Name of the Son (John 14:26).

4. He did not Speak of Himself (verse 33).

5. He Revealed the Things of Isaac (verse 53; John 16:14).

6. He Witnesses for his Master (verse 35).

7. He Guides all the Way Home (verse 61). "The Comforter may abide with you forever" (John 14:16).

Every act of this servant seems instinct with deep spiritual teaching. He would not eat bread until he had made known his errand (verse 33). The Holy Spirit cannot have fellowship with us until He has revealed to us the character of the Father and of the Son. He said, "Hinder me not" (verse 56). If the presence of Jesus Christ is to be enjoyed we must be obedient to this Holy Messenger.

IV. Rebekah; or, The Bride of Christ. "Will you go with this man? She said, I will go" (verse 58). While Rebekah is a type of the Church—called out by the Spirit of God, and separated unto the Name of Jesus—yet we must not lose sight of our individual responsibility. The heavenly Eliezer is still calling out a people for His Name. In the Gospel we still hear the divine entreaty, "Will you

go with this Man?" This call—

1. Is Gracious. It is not a question of character.
2. It is Personal. "Will you?" She alone could answer it.
3. It is Urgent. "Hinder me not." He may pass on to others.
4. It is a Question of the Will. "Will you?" It is not a question of moral fitness. "Whoever will." Unwillingness is the only unfitness.
5. It Implies Separation. "Will you go?" Count the cost (Ruth 1:16). Are you prepared to leave all and follow Him?

V. Following; or The Present Life. "Rebekah arose and followed the man." She believed, and so she obeyed. She knew whom she was following—the messenger who had come forth from the father to guide her into the presence of the son. What attractions would the country through which they passed have for her while her guide talked to her of the goodness and glories of Isaac, and while her heart burned within for a sight of him whom, having not seen, yet she loved, and rejoiced in the hope of his fellowship! Such is our present privilege—guided by the Spirit, taught of Him by the way, and looking for the appearing of our coming Lord. Are we as intent pressing on for the prize of this high calling as Rebekah was?

VI. Canaan; or, The Future Home. "Isaac took Rebekah, and she became his wife" (verse 67). All the troubles of her weary journey are forgotten now. One sight of our glorified Lord will heal all the wounds and scars received by the way. She now rests in his love, and becomes a joint-heir of his riches. She endured, as seeing him who was invisible; now she is satisfied in his presence and likeness. It is a precious thought that at the end of our journey Jesus will be as real to us as Isaac was to Rebekah; that this union is a personal one, and that the joy will be forever. If we follow the Spirit now we shall follow the Lamb then.

REHOBOTH; OR VICTORY THROUGH YIELDING. Genesis 26:17-28.

To own a well in Palestine was to possess a fortune. To be in possession of the Well of Salvation is to own the good fortune of everlasting refreshing and delight. Observe the—

I. Trial of Faith. "Isaac's servants dug, and found a well; and the herdsmen of Gerar did strive, saying, The water is ours." Well-digging—seeking to open up for ourselves sources of blessing—is a very common occupation. Not every well we dig will yield contentment. This one had to be named "Contention" (verse 20). They dug another; it also brought strife with increased force, and was called "Hatred." It was a severe trial to Isaac to spend so much labor on these wells and to let others claim the water. Isaac strove not, but meekly journeyed farther back into the valley. This is one of the hardest lessons we as Christians have to learn, to resist not the evil done against our own personal interests. It is so natural for us to "stand up for our rights." Fall back, and make room for God. "Not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise" (1 Peter 3:9).

II. Compensation of God. "They dug another well, and called it Rehoboth, for the Lord has made room for us." By calmly yielding and trusting they found the—

1. Provision of the Lord. "The Lord has made room for us." The Lord alone can make room for us. He knows when, and where, and what room we do need. When the Lord does make room for us He makes room for every gift and talent we have, room for every holy desire and every pure affection. It takes room of His making to meet all the needs of man as an immortal spirit. He has made room for us—

- (1) In the Atoning Death of Christ,
- (2) In the Glorious Gospel,
- (3) Room in His Loving Heart.
- (4) Room in His Heavenly Home.

The Lord has made room for us; let us enter in and take possession of His fullness in Jesus Christ.

2. Promise of the Lord. "The Lord appeared unto him, and said, I will bless you." Isaac sought not his own, and the blessing of the meek came upon him. The herdsmen of Gerar took the wells from him, but they could not rob him of the blessing of God. Our afflictions and trials often drive us back to the place of blessing prepared for us by the Lord. The meek shall inherit—

3. Presence of the Lord. "The Lord said, Fear not, I am with you." Let us not strive nor cry when the men of the world seek to rob us of some of the wells of our earthly comforts. The bulls of Bashan often pitch the meek believer into fatter pastures. Abiding in His presence we shall be hid from the strife of tongues, and kept as the apple of His eye. Take no thought for your life. "Seek you first

the kingdom of God,... and all these things shall be added" (Matthew 6:33). The Lord will make room for us.

4. Power of the Lord. "They said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with you." When Christians are found seeking not their own, but the good of others, others will see certainly that the Lord is with them. Isaac showed his faith in God by refusing to strive for the wells he himself had dug. "My God shall supply all your need" (Philippians 4:19). When shall this selfish, spirit-grieving hunt after worldly honors and preferments come to an end on the part of Christians? Has it come to an end with you? The Lord will make room for us; let us cast all our care upon Him. As a servant of Jesus Christ have you found your Rehoboth—room made for you by the Lord?

JACOB'S VISION. Genesis 28:10-22.

It is now a proverb among men that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." When in the midst of the fire and the lions God delivered His Hebrew children. It was while Stephen was being stoned that God opened the heavens before him. It was when John was an exile in Patmos that the Revelation came. It was after the sun had set on Jacob's path that he saw the ladder. The valley of Achor often becomes the door of hope. Observe—

I. The Benighted Wanderer; or, The Sinner's Condition. "He tarried there all night, because the sun was set." Jacob's plight was a sad one. As a terrified fugitive he was running for his life (verses 27-41). Night overtook him in a "certain place." Ah, these certain places—places and experiences into which we often run unawares, but places appointed by God where we shall meet with Him. It may be a Christian friend, a meetinghouse, or a season of deep affliction. Jacob, like every other self-righteous sinner, was seeking to have a success by a life of deceit and unreality. Such a life is a life of misery through constant dread of discovery. Is the sun of your hope setting? Is the night of dread and despair gathering around? Rest and look up!

II. The Wonderful Ladder; or, The Way of Salvation. "Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven." This new and heavenly way was revealed to Jacob by God Himself. It is a lovely type of Him who is "the Way" (John 14:6). This ladder, like the salvation of Jesus Christ, was "set up on the earth," indicating that it was a way of access for man. Its "top reached to Heaven." The ladder of Christ's Cross did not come short of the very Throne of God's Holiness. All men's ladders fail to reach Heaven (Romans 10:3). Jesus Christ, like Jacob's ladder, links earth to Heaven. "I am the Way" (John 14:6). "There is none other Name" (Acts 4:12).

III. The Angelic Climbers; or, The Ministry of Angels. "Behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." The angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). As soon as the ladder is set up the angels are on it. How quick they are to take advantage of any opportunity of service! The angels have no way from earth to Heaven but this one way: they ascend and descend upon the Son of Man (John 1:50).

IV. The Gracious Promise; or, The Gospel Message. "Behold, the Lord stood above it." God by the way of the ladder revealed Himself and His will to Jacob. What a foreshadowing of God in Christ—the New Way—reconciling us unto Himself. The Lord stood above it, assuring us that Christ is the Way to God. The Gospel of God, preached to Jacob, offered a threefold blessing—

1. A Possession. "The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it." Those who trust Christ, the Living Ladder, will receive an inheritance among the saints in light.

2. Protection. "I am with you, and will keep you." At Jesus' feet this sweet promise is ours also, "The Lord, your keeper" (2 Kings 2:2).

3. His Abiding Presence. "I will not leave you." Fear not. At the foot of the Cross there is the promise of grace sufficient (Hebrews 13:5, 6). "I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken."

V. The Solemn Discovery; or, The Testimony of the Awakened. "Jacob awaked, and said, Surely the Lord is in this place." To those still asleep the Cross of Christ is but as a confused dream; to those awake it is a "dreadful place"—dreadful both to God and man; yes, and to the devil also. The experience of Jacob at the foot of the ladder has been the experience of many at the foot of the Cross, and very much after the same moral order. 1, The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. God in Christ, on the Cross, and I knew it not. What a solemn discovery! 2, This is a dreadful place—dreadful, because at is the place where the awful question of sin has been settled; where the wrath of God fell upon the head of His Holy Son. 3, This is the House of God. Here God dwells, in Christ, as a Refuge and a Hiding-place for sinful man. 4, This is the Gate of Heaven—the door of access into eternal life and unfading glory. "If any man enter in he shall be saved" (John 10:9).

VI. The Anointed Pillar; or, The Sacrifice of Praise. Gratitude and thankfulness constrained the privileged wanderer to lift up the pillars of praise to the Name of Him who had so graciously blessed Him. Only the presence of God can make a Bethel; only those to

whom this presence has been revealed can really raise the anointed pillars of song. Where are the pillars that the goodness of God has constrained us to set up? Are they within sight of those who pass by? Every act of kindness done to others, for Jesus' sake, is a memorial pillar. The oil of grace makes every such deed holy and acceptable before God.

VII. The Willing Vow; or, The Covenant of Consecration. "Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me,... then shall the Lord be my God." Let us make this covenant without the "ifs," for the promises of grace are unconditional. Jacob on condition of prosperity was willing to give God a tenth part of his possession. This is good, but very Jacob-like. Any worldly man would gladly make such a bargain. Consecration goes deeper down than the tenth; it embraces all. "You are not your own; you are bought with a price: glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:19, 20). Therefore "present your body a living sacrifice unto God" (Romans 12:1). In so doing we shall "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

THE MYSTERIOUS WRESTLER. Genesis 32:24-31.

It is now twenty years since Jacob made his covenant at Bethel with the God of all grace. Had God been faithful to His promise? Let Jacob testify, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands" (verse 10). The blessing of God is not a passing emotion, but the abiding favor of His presence and power, therefore something that cannot fail (Genesis 28:15). The blessing of God, it makes rich. The various attitudes of Jacob as brought before us here are suggestive.

I. See Him Fearing. "He was greatly afraid and distressed" (verse 7)." And he sent them over the brook, and Jacob was left alone" (verses 23, 24). He feared his brother, and tarried behind alone. The fear of man brings a snare, but by the infinite mercy of God Jacob fell into the arms of almighty grace and love. He was alone; now was God's opportunity to get into close contact with him. Lone souls are fit subjects for the fellowship of Heaven. Come you yourselves apart that the Lord may have a better chance of dealing with the innermost thoughts of the heart.

II. See Him Resisting. "There wrestled a man with him." When Jacob was alone the Divine Overcomer draws near. All at once Jacob finds himself struggling against Him. This is so natural. In the pride of our heart our self-will refuses to bow submissively at the first manifestation of the divine will, when that will is to deliver us by yielding rather than by self-effort and carnal wisdom. The Jacob nature always strives to supplant the will of God by its own. Let us thank God that He contrives to wrestle with us until the day break. He knows that our only hope of success, as His servants, lies in our entire submission to Him.

III. See Him Crippled. "When He saw that He prevailed not, He touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint." The heavenly One wishes to prevail over our whole character and life that all may be filled with His power and blessing. The source of our strength must be touched, and broken, and withered, that His strength might be perfected in our weakness. Think of it! Our strength is just so much power of resistance. Peter's wisdom was a wrestling against his Lord (Mark 8:32). Has not the potter power over the clay? Submit yourselves to God.

IV. See Him Clinging. "I will not let You go except You bless me." Now that his strength is broken the resister becomes the clinger. This is the true attitude of blessing, clinging to the Overcomer. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. This submissive and helpless cry of entire dependence is always sure to bring forth such an answer as will forever change our character and revolutionize our whole life. Clinging to the pleading Christ is the all-conquering attitude of a conquering soul. "By faith we cling to You."

V. See Him Changed. "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince have you prevailed." The new name indicates the new nature; the new nature came not by struggling, but by yielding. The measure of our submission to Christ will be the measure of our victory for Him. Jacob has now gained his degree in the divine school, "P. G. M." (Power with God and with Men). Covet earnestly the best gifts. The way to prevail with men is to prevail with God; the way to prevail with God is to cling to Him with a stubborn trust.

VI. See Him Testifying. "I have seen God face to face." This is a great testimony. "I have seen God." No man can remain the same as before after he has seen God. The glory of such a vision is sure to blind the eyes to the sinful pleasures of the world by transforming the inner life. To see Jesus is to see God. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). "This is the true God" (1 John 5:20). Have you got into such close touch with Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, that you can truthfully say, "I have seen God?"

VII. See Him Halting. "As he passed he halted upon his thigh." His walk evidenced the fact that he was a God-conquered man. Does our walk and conversation prove that we are princes with God by bearing the mark of a life wholly surrendered to God? All God's conquered ones are princes. It is surely significant that "As he passed the sun rose upon him." The sun of God's light and power will immediately rise upon us when we have yielded ourselves entirely up to the holy will of God. "His ways are ways of pleasantness" (Proverbs 3:17). Your will be done. "Lift You up upon me the light of Your countenance" (Psalm 4:6).

THE CALL TO BETHEL. Genesis 35:1-7.

Terror laid hold on Jacob because of the bloody deeds of his sons Simeon and Levi at Shechem. "I shall be destroyed, and my house," he said. Is this the language of "a prince with God?" Why this change? The God of Bethel has been forgotten. If Jacob has forgotten his covenant with God, God has not forgotten His promise to Jacob. God said unto Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel." Although we believe not, our gracious God still remains faithful, and reminds us of the place of refuge for our troubled souls. Look at the—

I. Place Appointed. "Go to Bethel." The very mention of Bethel would be enough to arouse the drowsy faith and slumbering thoughts of Jacob. Bethel was to him both "a dreadful place" and "the gate of Heaven." The gate of Heaven becomes the House of God, His place of refuge and support. It is beautiful to observe how the grace of God brings salvation to His thoughtless servant. Troubled Christian, go to Calvary. Go to the Throne of Grace, the House of God, the Gate of Heaven.

II. Command Given. "Arise, go to Bethel, and dwell there." Abiding at Bethel under the shadow of the Almighty he will be safe from the vengeance of the angry Shechemites. Bethel (House of God) is typical of the place or condition of fellowship with God. This we may always have by resting in Christ, who is the way to Heaven and the abode of God. God is in Christ, therefore abiding in Him we abide in the fellowship of the Father. It is God's will that we should dwell there. Let us dwell in, this house forever.

III. Preparation Made. "Jacob said unto his household, Put away the strange gods, and be clean and change your garments." Some of Jacob's household had brought the gods of strangers with them from the land of Mesopotamia. A separation must be made. If we would dwell in unbroken companionship with the God of Bethel there must be no other God among us, no usurping thought or thing. We must be clean, cleansed from all sin, and clothed in change of garments. Holiness becomes the House of God.

IV. Reason Urged. "I will make an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress." God's call to Jacob reminds him of His former kindness to him in the time of trouble. The kindness of God showed us in the gift of His Son, and at the time of our spiritual distress should surely constrain us in the time of weakness and fears to arise and go to Him. "Lord, to whom can we go?" (John 6:68). "He who spared not His own Son,... how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). Not one has failed of all His Promises.

V. Effect Produced. "They journeyed; and the terror of God came upon the cities." When the people of God set their faces to seek Him, and to be obedient to Him at any cost, it is impossible but the ungodly will feel the power of it. When God is sanctified in His people He will be exalted among the heathen. The reason why the ungodly are so brazen-faced in these days is because the people of God are so worldly-minded. Bethel is forgotten, and other gods have dominion in the camp.

VI. Place of Blessing. "Jacob came to Bethel, and built an altar; and God appeared unto Jacob again" (verse 9). When he came to the appointed place he inherited the promised blessing. God's Word will be fulfilled in us when by faith we take our stand upon it. It is impossible to dwell at Bethel and be a stranger to God, or to remain unchanged. God said unto Jacob, "Your name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel." This was Jacob's second blessing. It was the breaking up of that self-seeking spirit which characterized him all along the past. Have we had such a vision of God that every idol has been buried, the altar of complete consecration erected, and our characters so entirely transformed that we have become dead to self-serving and alive unto God? If not, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there."

JOSEPH, THE PATIENT SUFFERER. Genesis 37.

Joseph is a well-known and fruitful type of Jesus Christ. He was indeed despised and rejected; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Like our blessed Lord, when cast out by man, He was exalted by God to be a Prince and a Savior. It is instructive and comforting to observe that in all His afflictions there were some compensating elements. If demons tempted Christ, angels strengthened Him. God has always some way of escape for His suffering ones (1 Corinthians 10:13). Every trial endured for Christ will bring in some way fresh supplies of grace and blessing.

I. He was Despised by his Brethren, but Beloved by his Father (verses 3, 4). Like Christ, he came to his own, but his own received him not; but although his brethren despised him, he was acknowledged by the father as his beloved son, in whom he was well pleased. What a consolation to the timid Christians, persecuted it may be in their own home by their own kith and kin. "Beloved of the Father" (Genesis 38:3). Let this sweeten every bitter trial. Remember it was the experience of our Lord and Master. "Neither did His brethren believe in Him."

II. He was Hated for his Words, but Honored with Visions (verses 8, 9). His words of wisdom and revelation were as goads in their

hearts; they wounded their pride while they manifested the purpose of God. "They hated him the more; and he dreamed yet another dream." Stephen was hated and stoned by men; but God opened the heavens to his vision. We might be hated more for our words if we were like Joseph and Jesus, faithfully telling out the whole truth as revealed to us by God's Holy Spirit. If the Word is not preached the visions will cease, and that which we have learned will become stale and formal.

III. He was Cast into a Pit, but there was no Water in it (verse 24). The ungodly can have no power at all over us except it be given them of our Father in Heaven. The fire had no power over the three Hebrews, because their time of testimony had not yet come to an end. They cast Paul and Silas into prison, but there was nothing in it to damp the joy of their heart or hinder their fellowship with God. "They prayed and sang praises." They cast Christ into the pit of death, but it was to Him the place of eternal victory. Fear not.

IV. He was Sold as a Slave, but he was a Prosperous Man (verse 28; chapter 39:2). Like our heavenly Joseph, he became of no reputation, being bartered for the price of a common slave. "But he was a prosperous man." "I have finished the work You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). The man is always prosperous who succeeds in doing the will of God. Sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet the pleasure of the Lord prospered in His hand. It does not matter what low value the world may set upon the servant of God, he will be a prosperous man in God's sight if he pleases Him.

V. He was Falsely Blamed, but the Lord was with Him (Genesis 39:7-23). Many unrighteous and blasphemous charges were brought against the Holy Son of God. No Joseph beloved by the Father shall escape. The pure in heart not only see God, but suffer for His sake. If your heart be hot with zeal for God, men will charge you, if not with wrath and malice, at least with uncharitableness. But if they say all manner of evil against you falsely, rejoice and be exceeding glad (Matthew 5:11, 12).

VI. He was Neglected by the Butler, but Remembered by his Master. If his companions in tribulation forgot him, the Lord whom he served remembered him, and made all things to work together for his good. We need not be discouraged, although those whom we may have helped, and from whom we might expect a word spoken in our favor, forget all about us in their eagerness to secure favor for themselves. The Lord knows where His faithful ones are. He needs no letter of commendation; He can easily create the circumstances which will make it necessary to call forth the hidden one. As Christian workers let us be faithful where we are, although it should be in some seemingly forgotten dungeon. It is possible for us so to live that we may become even indispensable to God. God's great ones are often prepared in pits and prisons. He knows what we are good for, and when and how to lift us up. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

JOSEPH, THE EXALTED HEART-SEARCHER. Genesis 42-44.

Joseph came out of great tribulation to inherit the kingdom of privilege and honor. Like Jesus, he who was despised by his brethren was exalted by the King to His own right hand. As long as Joseph was in his state of "humiliation he was rejected by his own. As long as Christ was in weakness He was despised by His own nation. While Joseph remained unknown to his brethren his dealings with them were perfectly mysterious. Is it not so still with our exalted Kinsman-Redeemer? Until we know Him His dealings with us by His Spirit seem strange and puzzling. Notice the—

I. Attitude He Assumed. "He spoke unto them by an interpreter" (chapter 42:23). They were not yet reconciled to him, so he could not talk to them as a friend face to face. The Holy Spirit is the great Interpreter of our heavenly Joseph's words. He speaks to us while in our sins by His convicting Spirit. While we are strangers to Him He can only deal with us as a ruler, not as our brother. We should be thankful that He is pleased to speak to us in any way.

II. Manner of His Speech. "He spoke roughly unto them" (chapter 42:7). "He spoke hard things." The Lord has to speak sharp things to us that we may be awakened to a sense of our sinfulness. His brethren had never yet confessed their sin. They must be made to feel the bitter pangs of guilt before they can know the depths of His forgiving love. If Jesus by His Spirit speaks hard things to us, it is that we might be prepared for His exceeding great kindness.

III. Results that Followed. "They said one to another, We are truly guilty concerning our brother" (chapter 42:21). When He is come, the Interpreter, He shall convince of sin. The work is now done; their sin has been brought to remembrance, and made exceeding sinful in the presence of him whom they sinned against. "We are surely guilty." This is the opening of the door of the heart for the entrance of the saving Word of Him who is alive from the dead. Have you made this confession?

IV. Privilege they Enjoyed. "Joseph said, Bring these men home, for they shall dine with me" (chapter 43:16). They have acknowledged their sin. Now they receive his favor. What grace to be brought into the house of Joseph the prince, and to dine with him! The Lord Jesus Christ leads the penitent soul into His banqueting house of love that all their needs may be fully met. But as yet they know him not. It is possible to be feasting on His mercies and yet be strangers to Himself.

V. Compassion He Showed. Three times do we see Joseph weeping (chapter 42:24; 43:30; 45:2). Oh, what tenderness was in his

heart, even when he spoke roughly. How Christlike was all this! What a lesson for those who deal with souls in His Name! If the tongue must speak sharp, piercing words, let them come from a loving, weeping heart. Think of Paul when he said, "I tell you, even weeping" (Philippians 3:18). "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Our words are many, but our tears are few.

VI. The Victory He Gained. The one who sold him now says, "Let your servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord" (chapter 44:33). What a change has been wrought! He who persecuted his brother is now willing to be a bondsman in his brother's stead. What has brought about this moral transformation? The words and actions of him whom God has highly exalted. Has the influence of Christ wrought such a good work in us? Are we prepared to give ourselves for the good of others?

VII. The Revelation He Gave. "Joseph said, Come near, I am Joseph, your brother" (chapter 45:4). They have confessed that "God has found out their iniquity" (chapter 44:16). Thus enmity is slain, and now the full revelation is given them. Joseph was not satisfied until he manifested himself. Jesus Christ, like Joseph, offers us His gifts and tender invitations to come near that He might reveal Himself to us. This blessing, in all its mighty, melting fullness, can only be enjoyed by those who come near to Him. Such a revelation is needed to keep us low and trustful at His feet. He still says, "Come near, and I will manifest Myself." "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

VIII. The Comfort He Administered. "Now therefore be not grieved;... for God did send me before you to preserve life" (chapter 45:5). "Moreover, he kissed all his brethren; after that his brethren talked with him" (verse 15). How sublimely suggestive is all this! When the Lord makes Himself known to us then comes the sweet assurance of forgiveness through His own blessed Word. After that we are in a condition to talk with Him. Oh, how sweet and precious is this fellowship! How much we shall have to talk about when we see Him in the glory of His power, and are "forever with the Lord."

JOSEPH, THE REVEALED KINSMAN. Genesis 45.

This is a most thrilling chapter, read in the light of Christ's second appearing. Joseph's brethren sold him and cast him out. They would not have this man to reign over them; now he appears before them in the character as a ruler. They look upon him whom they have pierced with many a sorrow (Zechariah 12:10), and wail because of him. Confessing their sin, they receive him as their kinsman, and own him as their lord. Afterwards they go forth to proclaim the glad tidings of his resurrection and glory. "Joseph is alive, and is governor over all the land!" Although Christ was despised and rejected by His brethren He shall appear in great power and glory, and shall be King over all the earth. Then His brethren (Jews) will acknowledge Him as the One "sold and rejected," and become the heralds of His power and glory, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. Here notice—

I. The Revelation. "Joseph made himself known unto his brethren" (verse 1). No one could reveal Joseph to them but himself. Christ manifests Himself unto us. He shall be revealed from Heaven. The revelation of Christ to us is very much what the revelation of Joseph was to his brethren.

1. It is the Revelation of One whom we have Rejected. How often have we heard His pleadings through the preaching of His Word (chapter 42:21). "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. 3:20).

2. It is the Revelation of a Guilty Past. "They were troubled at his presence" (verse 3). When Christ is revealed to the soul our sins are sure to stand out before us. They are realized that they might be blotted out; uncovered that they might be buried forever.

3. It is the Revelation of Real Kinship. "I am Joseph, your brother" (verse 4). Members of His flesh and of His bones. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh that we might be partakers of His divine nature. What fullness of consolation wells up out of these simple words, "I am your brother!" My Father and your Father.

4. It is the Revelation of Great Grace. "Joseph said, Now therefore be not grieved" (verse 5). He is willing to forget the past. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). The revelation of Christ is the revelation of the infinite grace of God.

II. The Commission. Now that they have been reconciled to their exalted and kingly brother they receive a grand commission from him. "Haste you, and go up and say." Does every revelation of Christ not imply a commission? "Let him that hears say, Come" (Rev. 22:17). "Go you into all the world" (Mark 16:15).

1. Proclaim that He is Alive. "They went and told, saying, Joseph is alive." He who passed into the pit and the prison is now lifted up to the throne. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). "The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 24:34).

2. Proclaim that He is Exalted. "God has made me lord of all." The keys of the treasure-houses of Egypt hang on the belt of Joseph. Our exalted Kinsman is the possessor of all. The keys of Hell and of death are in His hands, and all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. "All things are yours; for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23).

3. Proclaim His Willingness to Receive. "Go and say, Come unto me" (verse 9). Now that he is exalted he desires others to behold

his glory and share his blessing. What an invitation is this, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). It comes from One who is mighty to save.

4. Proclaim His Power to Supply all Need. "I will nourish you." Come, and abide with Him. "My God shall supply all your need" (Philippians 4:19). Is not this a glorious Gospel? "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16). He saves the sinner and He nourishes the saved,

III. The Reception. How did Jacob receive the great and glad tidings sent by his long-lost son? Just in the same way that many receive the tidings of salvation through a once crucified but now risen Redeemer.

1. He Doubted. "Jacob believed them not." To those who know not the character and purpose of God it seems too good news to be true (Acts 17:32).

2. He Believed. "When he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, he said, It is enough." Ah, yes! when the eyes are opened to see the suitable provision made for us by our exalted Lord, and realize our own need, we can no longer doubt His message of love and mercy.

3. He Decided. He said, "Joseph is alive; I will go." Faith leads to action. It is not easy to move people for God until their heart finds rest in His Word.

4. He Possessed. "Joseph gave them a possession in the best of the land" (Genesis 47:11). To receive Christ's invitation is to become the heir of an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:4, 5). Our kingly Master always gives the best. "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at His right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

JOSEPH, THE RULING PRINCE. Genesis 47.

There was a famine in the land, but there was enough and to spare in the hands of him whom God had exalted, and who carried the royal seal. All the needy ones must "go to Joseph." The time of dire necessity only helped to show forth the unsearchable riches of the Great Deliverer. There is enough in Jesus Christ to satisfy every famishing soul. "Lord, to whom can we go? You only have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). It is not without deep meaning that the famine came to an end only when the people had no more to give. When they came to an end of themselves then God stepped in and delivered them. Many are still struggling through a time of spiritual famine in their souls, because they have not yet ceased bartering with God for blessing. In this chapter we have Joseph honored and served by those who once denied and persecuted him. We may see here in type our relationship to Jesus Christ as servants. There is—

I. Great Privilege. "He gave them a possession in the best of the land" (verse 11). In being brought into the land of Egypt they were brought under Joseph's rule; into the kingdom of Joseph. We as Christians have been brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son, within the sphere of His gracious rule. This is our Goshen, the frontier of Heaven. This blessed Land of Promise is the best of all lands, for here the Prince Himself exercises His Personal care over us. "He nourished them with bread."

II. Honest Confession. "And they said, You have saved our lives" (verse 25). He saved their lives by making provision for them long before the famine came. Jesus made provision for us many years ago. He still keeps mercy for thousands; He only can save our lives. Have we honored Him by such a testimony? You have saved my life; saved by grace alone. Unto Him be the glory forever.

III. Willing Service. "Let us find grace in your sight, and we will be servants" (verse 25). If the grace of Joseph constrained them to consecrate themselves to the service of Pharaoh, how much more should the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ constrain us to yield ourselves unto God. "The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "Present your bodies a living sacrifice... unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

IV. Ample Provision. "Joseph said, I have bought you; lo, here is corn for you, sow the land" (verse 23). Joseph not only bought them, but filled their hands with good seed that they may now become fruitful laborers. The parable is plain. Redeemed by His blood and filled with the seed of the Word we go forth as sowers that fruit may abound to the glory and praise of His Name. Let us never forget that He supplies the seed. In our emptiness let Us come to Him who gladly fills the hands of those whom He has bought. This is the consecrated life—filled with His fullness.

V. Special Reward. "Look out men of activity, and make them rulers" (verse 6). The diligent shall stand before kings. Men of activity for the cause of Christ will receive their reward in the day of His appearing. Our Joseph will look them out. Not a cup of cold water given in His Name will be forgotten. How many Christians are losing this honor by trifling away their precious time! The day will declare it. Let us not be weary in well-doing; remember the due season.

VI. Royal Honor. "Joseph took his brethren and presented them before Pharaoh" (verse 2). Our Kinsman, Redeemer, and Prince is able also to present us faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy. If He should ask you on that day, "What was your occupation?" As a Christian what would you answer? Could you say, "Your servants were shepherds," men who fed the flock of Christ. Let us praise Him for the all-atoning blood, and for the almighty, indwelling Spirit by which we may be able to stand before the throne without fault. Be active for Him if you would be blameless before Him at His coming.

TYPES OF CHRISTIANS. Genesis 49.

This is Jacob's dying and prophetic blessing, "I will tell you what shall befall you in the last days." Taught by the Holy Spirit, he is able to declare the consequences that will surely follow certain well-defined characteristics that had already appeared among his own family. The features of Jacob's sons, with their results, are still being manifested among the children of God. We have with us still the—

I. Unstable Reubens. Reuben had many excellencies, "excellency of dignity and of power," the first-born, and the child of great hope, but being "unstable as water" he did not excel. Reuben is a type of those Christians who have many excellent gifts, but who have one besetting sin that acts like a fly in the ointment. Reuben's sin cost him his birthright (1 Chronicles 5:1). Sin always engenders instability, and leads to the loss of our birthright, of spiritual power, and progress. Stand fast.

II. Self-Willed Simeons and Levis. "In their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they dug down a wall." Jacob had to say of them, "You have troubled me" (chapter 34:30). How much of the trouble that comes upon ourselves, and others, has its root and cause in the same evil source, self-will. No wonder Jacob said, "O my soul, come you not into their secret." The conduct of these sons led to division and scattering (verse 7). There are always the fruits of a self-seeking spirit. Let the cursed self-will go to the Cross. "I delight to do Your will, O my God"(Psalm 40:8).

III. Praising and Courageous Judahs. Judah means the "praise of Jehovah." Judah is a lion's whelp. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah." The praising and courageous Christian will always possess the scepter of power. Like Judah, we shall be able to put the foot of victory on the neck of the enemy when we have more of the nature of the lion of the tribe of Judah in our lives and the praise of Jehovah on our lips. The scepter of spiritual power has departed from many a once Judah-Christian because of cowardliness and unfaithfulness to God. The true Judahs are always leaders (Numbers 10:14).

IV. Comforting and Consoling Zebulun. "Zebulun shall be for a haven." The words means "dwelling," or a place of refuge for the distressed. "Zebulun's border went up toward the sea." This son of Jacob may be taken as a type of the modern sons of consolation—ready to offer a hand of help or a word of comfort to souls who, like ships, are seeking refuge from the crushing tempest. Zebulun is always in great demand. The ministry of kindness is always acceptable. "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God "(Isaiah 40:1). "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

V. Timid and Self-Oppressed Issachars. "He saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant," and, being afraid to offend the enemy, "he bowed and became a servant to tribute." And so the dying father characterizes him as a "strong donkey." Strong, but stupid; one who possesses the power, but, through the fear of man, gets ensnared and enslaved. Issachar is typical of those who, though they have all the strength of Christ at their disposal, yet remain timid and weak and helpless, bowing to the yoke of every passion, the bond-slaves of the world, strong donkeys.

VI. Gunning and Sharp-Dealing Dans. "Dan shall judge, and shall be a serpent that bites the horse heels, so that the rider shall fall." This is close, personal dealing. Dan may represent those Christians who have the wisdom of the serpent, or rather the cunning way of the adder, in knowing how to bring down the pride of the enemy. The spiritual Danites can discern and judge. They know how to apply the truth, so that the enemies of God are brought low. Such can serve God best through personal dealing.

VII. Overcoming Gads. Gad shall be overcome, "but he shall overcome at last." Every Christian who would be an overcoming Gad must first himself be overcome. We must be vanquished if we would be victors in the cause of God. Those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb have been overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Lives conquered by the grace of God become conquerors through grace.

VIII. Blissful Ashers. Asher means "blessed." "His bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." He is a type of those blessed ones, so few in number, who are themselves satisfied with good things, and who are able to bring out of their treasures rich dainties for others. They have received the unsearchable riches of Christ; they are filled with the fullness of God, and so can minister kindly portions to others. Those who do not eat fat things will groan in their leanness.

IX. Joyful Naphtalis. "He is a hind let loose; he gives goodly words." The happy, skipping hind escaped from bondage, and now, growing goodly antlers, is a fit figure of those bright, joyful Christians who always delight in the liberty with which Christ has made

them free. They continue to revel in their first love; their words are goodly, and their appearance attractive.

X. Fruitful Josephs. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, whose branches run over the wall." Here we have the type of an ideal Christian. As a branch he abode by the well, kept within touch of the source of supply. He was fruitful, an evidence that as a bough he was fully satisfied. He was shot at, persecuted for righteousness' sake. Those fruitful for God are sure to be hated by the ungodly. His branches ran over the wall. The fruitful life is a blessing to others, even to those outside the wall of salvation. His bough abides in strength. Power for service remains as long as we abide by the well.

11. Discontented Benjamins. "Benjamin shall raving as a wolf: he shall devour and divide." Alas! that he should have so many successors in the camp of Christ; they are known by their fault-finding spirit. They are the tittle-tattle tale-bearers, always dividing the spoil, delighting to pass round the faults and failings of their brethren. From such, good Lord, save us!