

ed mother fears she will see her son die. Her heart sinks within her. She is in deep distress.

V. 17.—But the God who had charged Abraham to send her away was watching over her, and now in her trouble he speaks to her words of comfort: "God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. God has not rejected him. Isaac is preferred, but Ishmael shall not be forgotten."

Vv. 18, 19.—"Do not give way to despondency. Go help your boy and I will not only preserve him alive but make him the progenitor of a nation." And now that she is cheered and aroused to exert her energies, behold a reviving spring, or well of water, in the desert, which she had failed to perceive. God is perpetually opening for us and revealing to us wells of living water, and consolation for us in our distress.

Vv. 20, 21.—God prolonged his life,—gave him strength. He dwelt in the wilderness and became an archer. He not only lived in that wilderness where his mother thought he must die; but he founded a nation which has lived there ever since, and the sameness of their customs may be traced in the simple record, *His mother took him a wife.*

LESSONS.

1. The church, or children of promise, may expect persecution. It is a part of their portion on earth.

2. God will deliver his people from their persecutors, and bring them to the heritage which he has promised them.

3. Let us beware of being satisfied with an outward connection with the family of God,—with a descent from pious parents, or participation in sacramental observances. The Jews have been cast off, and the Gentiles have come to occupy the privileges of Abraham's house. The last shall be first and the first last.

4. In the wilderness, and in hunger, thirst and distress, the Lord can and will provide.

DOCTRINE TO BE PROVED.

Believers in Christ are the true children of God. John i. 12, 13; Gal. iii. 26, also iv. 28; 1 John iii. 1.

THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT: *The trial of Abraham.* Gen. xxii. 1-19.

V. 1.—After these things—the many trials experienced and the frequent proofs of fidelity given—God did tempt Abraham. In the sense of exciting to sin, God tempts no man. James i. xiii. This is the work of satan, of demons and of bad men. In the sense of putting principles and professions to the test, God does try men, and

this is here the meaning of tempt. God tried his people in the wilderness. Deut. xiii. 3. He tried Hezekiah. 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

V. 2.—Abraham's trial was extraordinary. No such command from God to a father was given before or since. The command was to offer Isaac in sacrifice, not a servant or stranger, but his son—not a son merely, but Isaac, the child of Sarah, most tenderly beloved—the child of promise, given after long expectation—the son of his old age, the crown of his hopes. Nor is he to die by a visitation of God, he must die by the stroke of his beloved and loving father. What elements of anguish are involved in this command! What difficulties arise to view, forbidding him to do what was in itself and must ever appear to the friends and enemies of true religion so revolting and unnatural!

V. 3.—He prepares to obey. He makes haste. He first of all satisfies himself that the command was divine. Assured of this he knows that it is right, and therefore he will not consult with flesh and blood, but with a stern will, brings all his natural and tender affections into submission to the mind of God. He calls his servants early, and without disclosing his awful mission to Sarah, he takes the road.

V. 4.—From Beersheba to Moriah, whither Abraham was directed, may be stated at two days journey. But it was on the third day that Abraham sighted the place. His trial was aggravated by the time thus given for reflection, and for all the tender affections of his nature to make themselves felt. Yet he goes forward.

V. 5.—He would be alone, and subject to no interference from his servants. His language is remarkable. "and the lad will go forward and worship, and come again,"—equivalent to say, We will come again. Did he expect that he would truly offer Isaac? We can scarcely doubt that he did, but he had faith to believe that he would not perish, and that even if he should die God should raise him up and fulfil his promise of posterity through him. Heb. xi. 17-19.

Vv. 6-8.—What a touching dialogue is this! How keenly must the faith and tender love of Abraham have been tried by that question from his gentle and loving son, toiling patiently under the load of wood on which the victim was to be laid. The father's reply seems to have been prophetic and provided for his wounded heart by the Spirit of the Lord.

Vv. 9, 10.—In these verses we have the triumph of faith complete. It was now not only begun but perfected: (1) he gave up his son in heart from the first, and prepared for the journey; (2) he set out and travelled for days to reach the destined place; (3) he