

Our Contributors.

For DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

Abraham's Offering up of Isaac.

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Genesis xxii, 1-19. In v. 1, of this chapter, God is said to have once "tempted" Abraham, and said to him; "Abraham," and he said, "Behold, here I am." He had not yet told him what He desired him to do, but Abraham believed that it would be all right.

Very commonly, we use the word "tempt" in a bad sense—that of trying to draw one into the commission of sin. Satan, for this purpose, tempted Christ forty days and forty nights. But God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. There is no unrighteousness in Him. He is infinitely holy. He must be so. Therefore, the very least sin deserves His wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come.

Let us now consider how God tempted Abraham. In reply to His call to him, "Abraham," Abraham said: "Behold, here I am." God then said, v. 2, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

This was a very severe trial of Abraham. It would have been so, had Isaac been no relation whatever of his, for he was a kind-hearted man. But he was his son—his own flesh and blood. More than that, Isaac was his only son. Beside him, he had neither son nor daughter. In Jer. vi. 26, it is said: "Make thee mourning, as for an only son." In Zech. xii. 10, it is said, "As one mourneth for his only son." The fact that the young man whose remains the widow of Nain, whom our Lord met when she was following them to the grave, was her only son, made her feelings all the more painful.

Ishmael, whose mother's name was Hagar, God calls the son of Abraham. He was ninety years old and nine, when Ishmael was born, and a hundred, when Isaac was born. But God did not own Ishmael as Abraham's son. He gave him great promises, but they were only of a worldly nature. He said of him to his mother; xvi. 12, "He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." We shall presently see how very different were the promises regarding Isaac.

The Lord next, and in conclusion, said of Isaac, "Whom thou lovest."

Abraham did not delay to obey God's command to him. We are told, vs. 3-13, that he rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and wood for the burnt offering, and went forward. On the third day, he saw the place afar off. Then he said to the young men who knew nothing of his purpose; "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." This plainly implied that though Isaac should be put to death, he would be restored to life. But what authority had Abraham for saying so? The Lord had given him "exceeding great and precious promises" which even He, though the Al-

mighty, could not fulfil unless Isaac were married, and a father, which, as yet, he was not. He said to him; "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This promise was to be fulfilled through Isaac. No mention was made in it, of Ishmael. The Lord said: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Abraham, therefore, believed that though he should put Isaac to death, which, no doubt, he believed he would, the Lord would restore him to life. In Heb. xi. 19, it is stated as a proof of Abraham's faith that he "accounted that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." This refers not to Isaac's deliverance from death, but to his birth. Paul says that God promised it to Abraham, the patriarch "against hope believe in hope,.... And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb;... And, therefore, it was imputed to him for righteousness." Read Roman iv. 18-22. In Heb. xi. 12, he is termed, "as good as dead." But let us now turn to the narrative.

In v. 6, it is said: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac said, v. 7, to his father, 'Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' He did not know his father's purpose. His question must have caused his father great pain. He answered it according to the form in which it was put. He said, v. 8, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.' So they went both of them together.

And they came, v. 9, to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

Isaac was, of course, much stronger than his father, yet he made not the slightest attempt to escape out of his hands. No doubt, Abraham had already told him the promises which we have considered and now, he added that, as he was "the child of the promise," God would restore him to life, though his father should slay him, Isaac's faith in God's word was as strong as his father's.

All was now ready for the offering. The knife gleamed in Abraham's uplifted hand. Another moment and it will go down into the body of Isaac v. 10.

But hark! a voice calls out of heaven to Abraham, vs. 11, 12. The angel of the Lord forbids him to do anything to his son, for he knows that he fears God seeing he has not withheld him from Him. Abraham then saw behind him, v. 13, a ram caught in the thicket by his horns which he took and offered, instead of his son. How pleasing to both Abraham and Isaac, this discovery must have been! The angel of the Lord then again out of heaven repeated to Abraham his promises concerning Isaac, ending with the words; "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice." vs. 15-18.

The angel was not a created one. He must have been the Lord Jesus Christ on whom the sword of God's justice fell as the

great Sin-bearer. Concerning Him, the Lord said; "Awake, O sword against My Shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd." Zech. xiii. 7. Mark, xiv. 27.

God thus "tempted," that is, tried Abraham for an example of faith to all mankind, down to the end of time. He stood the test. His faith, when it was weighed in the balances, was not found wanting. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God.

We learn from this passage, that if one desires to do a bad act, and God in His providence, prevents him from doing it, He yet accounts him as having done it, and punishes him accordingly. Read Matt v. 27-28. Whereas, if he desire to do a good one, and God, in His Providence prevents him from doing it, He yet accounts him as having done it, and rewards him accordingly. Take the case of Abraham which we are now considering, God to use a homely phrase takes the will for the deed.

Abraham and Isaac then returned to the young men who were waiting for them with the ass. v. 19. Then they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-Sheba.

For the sake of shortness I shall now close with just a few words. "The children of God are the believing descendants of Abraham, that is those who possess his faith." May we be of faith and so be blessed with faithful Abraham who is now in God's presence where there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

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American Books in England.

Mr. Chalmers Roberts, an American literary agent who for four years has been engaged in introducing American books to English readers, is authority for the statement that "ten American books are published to day where one was published twenty years ago." These books, he says, are "winning an army of readers, who had, in the main, to be aroused from intense indifference to the details of American life." The same writer continues, "No one aware of the general tone of successful English novels could have predicted the large sales secured in Great Britain for 'David Harum,' 'Eben Holden,' 'Old Grogan Graham,' and Mrs. Wiggs.' Human nature is the same everywhere, and these books are intensely human; yet they are also intensely foreign and full of detail quite unintelligible to the average Briton. Certain writers, like James Lane Allen, win a large audience because of their adherence to the traditions of art. Others are purely the favorites of fortune, like Winston Churchill, whose similarity of name with a popular and pushing young Englishman has undoubtedly helped the sale of his novels. Of people whose books sell well on their merits, there are two or three schools—Mary Wilkins, for instance, represents one, Ellen Glasgow, another, Jack London, and the late Frank Norris a third. Their books are all such books as the English reader expects from America, and most easily understands when he gets them. Aside from fiction, books like Andrew Carnegie's 'Empire of Business' sell permanently because the author is as well known in Great Britain as in America; like Booker T. Washington's, in that the humanitarian and sociological public is perhaps the widest in the world; like Helen Keller's autobiography, for the same reason, with the romantic attraction of the author's personality added.

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