

command. So following the promptings of faith is the noblest act of reason.

"For Christian works are no more than
Animate faith and love,
As flowers are the animate springtide."

FAITH—ITS QUALITIES.

1. Faith Is Prompt.—When Abraham heard the call of God that was to change his whole life, he exercised great promptness in obeying it. There is a popular maxim that second thoughts are best. And that maxim is worthy of consideration when applied to ordinary affairs, for in these, for the most part, to act on the first impulse is unsafe. But this advice is not so good when applied to matters which concern the soul. In those things that pertain to the conscience, first thoughts are, as a rule, the truest and best. He is a foolish man who, in the things of the eternal world, delays between the thought and the action. When God commands, to delay is to be disobedient. Faith makes haste to obey. Such was Abraham—ready to hear the Divine voice, prompt to obey it.

2. Faith Considers Others.—After the death of his father, Abraham took his place as the leader of the colony. He sought to urge others to obedience to the Divine will by the force of his authority, or by the milder influence of his example. He was known to his God as one who would command his household after him. True piety is never selfish. He who has received the mercy of heaven catches the spirit of the divine benevolence, and longs for others to share in similar blessings. Abraham was not content to be absorbed in attention to the salvation of his own soul. Religion does not place a saved man as an isolated individual, but rather in relation to others. The lights of the inner world of the soul, like the sun, are public—they are intended to bless far and wide. The life of both acquires a sublime value by the consciousness that its blessings are shared by multitudes of others.

3. Faith Faces Difficulties.—To all human appearance Abraham had little else than discouragement throughout the whole of his course. From an outside view the ordinary observer could not discern that he had received any real benefit from his belief in God. (a) He was a wanderer. He had no settled place of abode, but travels about from place to place. (b) He is visited by enemies. The Canaanites were already in possession, so that he could not pass through the country without challenge. He might have thought that his way would be made clear before him, and all he would require to do would be to take possession and enjoy. (c) Not much for himself. The land was to be given not to himself, but to his "seed." In the case of Abraham himself, the promise appeared to point to an earthly reward, but in reality had no such fulfilment. The promise referred to things remote and beyond the limits of his own earthly life. Here was faith which could trust in God against all appearances, and when denied a present earthly reward.

It was enough for him that God had spoken, and he would fulfil his word in his own way.

4. Faith Performs Religious Acts.—Abraham was not satisfied with private devotion—with those exercises of the soul which, though true and real, are invisible to others. He made a public profession and exhibition of his faith. He "built an altar unto the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord." Thus Abraham made a public confession of God, and showed that he regarded all things as consecrated to him. The action of Abraham in building an altar amounted to the taking possession of the land for God. So the believer holds the

gifts of Providence as steward of them, and not as their possessor. It is difficult for man to realize the invisible without the aid of the visible. Hence, the pious in all ages have built places in which to worship God. This arises from no desire to limit God in space; but in order that men might feel that he is present everywhere, they must feel that he is specially present somewhere. Abraham, too, was not one of those who had his heavenly treasure and kept it for himself alone. He made it known to all around him by outward acts of devotion. His building of the altar, and calling upon God, showed his belief that all claims were on the side of God, and not on that of man; that all true and lasting help and reward must come to man from above.

SCINTILLATIONS.

Obedience to the utmost of the Word of God is the necessary issue of a sound faith (v. 4).

The rule of the believer's life is what God has spoken. The divine word faith (v. 4).

He who shows the obedience of faith is fitted to be a leader of other souls (v. 5).

God does more than act upon men by the outward circumstances of life. He can appear to the spirit of man and impress it by his presence and his truth (v. 7).

The spiritual feelings of the soul express themselves in outward acts of devotion.

The gifts of God should be consecrated to his service. Noah thus consecrated the new world and Abraham the land of promise.

Abraham erected an altar: 1. As a protest against the idolatry around him. 2. As a spiritual example to his household. 3. As a recognition of an atoning sacrifice for sin.

We may on various occasions change places, provided we carry the true religion with us; in this we must never change.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

A necessity for the intelligent study of this topic is a brief biography of Abraham. Arrange for it. Any Bible dictionary will give the facts. The foregoing exposition presupposes this biography. Having had the life of Abraham presented, then have another paper on "What Abraham Teaches Us." Ample help will be found in this article. Then, throw out the question, "What can we learn from Abraham in our twentieth century life?" Have answers given generally from members present in the form of remarks or brief testimony.

OCT. 11.—"GREAT MEN OF THE BIBLE: WHAT JOSEPH TEACHES US."

Gen. 41: 14-16, 42-46.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Oct. 5. To have high ideals. Gen. 37, 57-59
Tue., Oct. 6. To bear injustice. Gen. 37, 18-23
Wed., Oct. 7. Not to remain a neutral. Gen. 38, 1-6
Thurs., Oct. 8. To show kindness. Gen. 40, 1-23
Fri., Oct. 9. To give God the glory. Gen. 41, 25-28
Sat., Oct. 10. To believe God's promises. Gen. 50, 25-26

In studying the great men of the Bible we are inclined to think that they are elect above common men by qualities and favors that ordinary persons can never obtain. The fact is, if we had seen Joseph when he lived we should have thought him remarkably like any other good man. If we had talked with him, we should have said: "Well, Joseph is human like the rest of us. His experience is much the same as ours, and what makes him different is the place he fills

in divine Providence." His ability may not be within our reach. But his good character any of us may possess.

JOSEPH'S CHARACTERISTICS.

1. Joseph Had Good Home Training.—In reviewing the life of Joseph, one notices the strong contrast between his character and that of his brethren. Joseph was good, noble, valiant; his brethren, selfish, cruel, murderous. Whence the difference? The brothers were born when Jacob was in the midst of active business life, and he probably spent little time in their home-training. But Joseph was the son of his advancing years, when the father had laid aside active business affairs, and had more leisure to attend to the moral and religious education of his son. Thus, in all likelihood, Joseph's careful home-training under the favorable conditions, made much of the difference between him and his wayward brothers. Home-training! It is true that there are examples of boys and girls, who have had good home-training, and who have drifted from parental counsel. It is also true that there are examples of boys and girls who have had bad home influences and turned out well. But the general principle still holds good—good and judicious home-training will tell, and a young person who has had such is highly favored, as he or she starts the race of life. Such training should ever be remembered, as in the case of Joseph, and father and mother who gave it, should be kept in grateful memory.

2. Joseph was Industrious.—Joseph is introduced to us at seventeen years of age, at work—busy performing his appointed tasks. Industry is divine, for Christ said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." Joseph's occupation at this time was that of a shepherd. He was not ashamed of it. He ought to have been proud of it, for he was a successful shepherd. It was a lowly position—true. But the way to rise from a lowly position is to be conspicuously successful in that lowly position. You may not have found your sphere yet, young man or young woman, but work hard at what you are at, and do your best to succeed, and other paths will likely open up to you. There are two ways before every youth entering upon life—one of ease, self-indulgence, dissipation and final failure; the other, of high purpose, noble endeavor, persevering effort, and then success. Which will it be?

"Toil with rare triumph,
Ease, with soft disgrace,
The motto still for us
And all the human race."

3. Joseph Sought Moral Good.—Joseph was sent to find his brothers and see how they fared. He found they were acting badly—probably destroying their father's property and indulging in dissipation. And Joseph brought to their father the evil report. He was no tattler. We all despise the tattler. But not to report a positive and dangerous evil in order to remove it is a criminal action. Epworth Leaguers should stand on the watch-tower of the nation, and when the enemy to moral and religious life in any form approaches, he should shout the alarm, to arms, to arms, the foe is nigh. Whether it be the liquor traffic, or neglected legislators, or assaults on the Great Book of Truth, or wickedness in high places, or evil in the lower walks of life, the true Christian must be on the alert, prove himself a good citizen of a great country, and pray and work that our common country may be free from those moral diseases that will sap the life of the nation. Eternal vigilance is the price of moral liberty.

4. Joseph had the Lord with Him.—