

## ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD.

HEBREWS xi. 8-18.

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Such a thing as personal connection with God would never have entered into our minds unless He had revealed Himself. We see in Abraham's history how God comes to him, and introduces Himself as a living Person to his soul, drawing him out of his own country and from his own kindred after Himself. Henceforth all Abraham's associations were to be with the living God, who promises to be to him a shield, and his exceeding great reward. Abraham had nothing to act upon but faith in God's word. What a fool he must have appeared to his worldly relatives, leaving all at the bidding of One whom he did not see, and in whom they did not believe.

All went well with him as long as he trusted in God to act for him, but when he tried to arrange matters for himself, it was all failure. We see this in his taking Terah and Lot with him; God never called *them* out, the word was, "Get *thee* out of thy country and from thy father's house." Abraham did not *leave all*, so he had to stop in Haran till Terah dies, and is at last obliged to desire Lot to separate himself from him; after that we find progress. Mark in the 8th verse, when called to go out, Abraham obeyed, *not knowing whither he went*.

This was a trial to which God put his faith, for the testing of it. Nothing tries human nature so

much as uncertainty; we can bear anything rather than be kept in suspense; there is relief in the worst certainty.

But that is just God's principle of acting with us: He does not want us to know beforehand how and when His promises are to be made good to us, for then there would be no exercise of faith.

God told Abraham that his seed was to be as the stars of heaven. How was this to be, seeing he had no child? Everything but that he had got, silver and gold, flocks, tents, and three hundred trained servants. But who was to inherit all this? Naturally this question would often suggest itself. Poor Sarah tried to help him out of the difficulty in *her way*, by smuggling a child into the house; but it was not *an Isaac, a son of promise*.

How we see ourselves in Sarah! We have no patience to wait God's time for *giving*, so we put forth our hand and take, often to our sorrow and spiritual loss. Had we just kept hanging on God, He would have given us something far better than the thing to which we had helped ourselves in our impatience.

From the 9th verse we see that the pilgrim and stranger character was kept up—dwelling in tents; houses are for Canaan, tents for the wilderness. God's dwelling in the wilderness was a tabernacle or tent, in Canaan a temple. Abraham kept true to the pilgrim character, Lot did not. He pitched his tent first *toward Sodom*, afterwards had a house

*in it*, and sat at the gate. What a place for a child of God to settle in and *receive honour*.

Abraham had his eye on a far different city, "whose builder and maker was God." Meanwhile he was satisfied to live in a tent, with God for his portion.

When tested, Abraham refused to take anything from the king of Sodom, from a thread even to a shoe latchet, lest he should say, "I have made Abraham rich." The very next thing we find is God saying to him, *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.* Whenever we are enabled to surrender what nature clings to for Christ's sake there is blessing in a clearer revelation of Himself to the soul: as it were, room is made for the Lord by the displacing of lower objects, and the promise of John xiv. 23 is made good in our experience—"If a man *love me*, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

What a wall of fire the Lord is round the soul that is *separated to Himself!* He plants the blood of Christ right behind us. Has He spoken to us of His glory, and told us of the glories awaiting us as fellow-heirs with Christ, and shall we turn back and *mind earthly things!* Shall not His country be our country, His associates our associates, while we are waiting in strangership down here, confessing ourselves pilgrims by our walk and ways, showing by our blessed independency of all the good things which nature esteems so highly, and our indiffer-

ence to the attractions by which so many are dazzled and blinded, that we are passing through this scene in haste to a better country, choosing nothing for ourselves, but receiving all as God's gift?

Does anything bright offer itself? Our first question should be, Does my Father give me this? if not, I don't want it. If I am a true pilgrim, I won't be thinking of settling down in a world like this; I will say, That can't be God's gift for me, it is not good enough; He has prepared for me a city; I am going *home*; meanwhile I want to keep my mind and heart free for Him who gave *Himself* for me.

We never read of God being the God of Lot; not but that He was Lot's God quite as much as Abraham's, but he could not associate His holy name with Sodom, of which Lot was a citizen. He is not ashamed to be called the God of pilgrims and strangers, and to associate His name with theirs.

The trial to which God put Abraham in offering up Isaac was very remarkable. He wanted to see whether he was hanging all his weight on the promise or not. He tries us often in the same way. How blessed when the faith he has given, when tried, is not found wanting!

In many ways our faith is tested. Do we know what it is to be kept in suspense? When we put forth a single thing to help ourselves, God just moves it out of His way, that He may work unhindered.

Walking with God, what is it? To hang on His word often kept in suspense—but taking nothing till He gives—living as a pilgrim and a stranger, looking on the glory beyond. Happy experience! The Lord grant it may be ours!

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MIXED MARRIAGES  
AND  
THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

*(Continued from No. 2.)*

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Is that which you find in your heart the thought of one that loves God? Is it a thought in accordance with the will of God—a thought suitable to one whom Christ has so loved as to humble Himself even to death for? Stop, poor soul, and ask yourself if you are allowing the thought which occupies you, because it is agreeable to Christ, to the Christ who gave Himself for you, to save you? He has your salvation at heart: He loves you; He knows what tends to ruin you, to make you fall in the wilderness. He will govern by no principles except His own, those of holiness—those which belong to the new nature. He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim. ii. 13.) He desires that you should not incur the terrible discipline which awaits the soul that has wandered. He desires that you should not suffer the losses into which your folly will drag you, if you allow yourself to follow your own will. He desires that you should not lose the enjoyment of His communion, and that the proofs of His love

towards you should not be suspended or weakened in your hearts. He speaks to you in His word, He judges the thoughts and intentions of your heart. Would you rather hear Him judge you, than ask Him to deliver you from what is too mighty for you? Or will you say like Israel, "I have loved strangers and after them I will go." (Jer. ii. 25.) You know that this thought does not come from Christ; you have not consulted him, although you may, perhaps, have dared to ask Him to bless your intentions and direct you. You know that the word judges what you are still keeping in your heart, and what has power over you; you are the slave and not the master of your thought. No, that thought is not from Christ, and while you allow it, you are neglecting God and His word. Well, you are bringing on you the chastening of God. God is full of mercy and has compassion on us and on our weaknesses. He is tender and pitiful in His ways; but if we are determined to follow our own will, He knows how to break it. He governs everything, and He governs His children in particular. He is not mocked, and what a man sows he will reap later on: (Gal. vi. 7.) The worst of all chastenings is that He should leave us to follow our own ways.

The second point I wish to lead you to remark is the government that God exercises with regard to His children. He warns them by His word, and if they do not listen, He interposes in His power to stop them, in order that He may be able to bless

them; (see Job xxxvi. 5-14; xxxiii. 14-30.) In the dealings of God salvation is not brought into question. He looks upon His children, and chastens those whom He loves. The persons of whom the Holy Ghost is speaking in Job are called "the just." God does not withdraw His eyes from them, and He says also to Israel by the prophet Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos iii. 2.)

In the epistle to the Corinthians we see that when the Christians turned the Lord's Supper into a scene of dissoluteness, God laid His hand upon them. Some of them were sick and others had even fallen asleep, (that is, had died); and the Apostle in calling attention to it adds, "If we judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Solemn thought! We are under the hand of the Lord who punishes sin wherever He finds it. He is a consuming fire, and when the moment is come, judgment begins at His house. What a difference between such relations with God, and the joy of His love and communion when one has not grieved His Spirit, and when one is walking under His eye and in the light of His countenance! I do not doubt that a large part of the sicknesses and trials of Christians are chastenings sent by God on account of things that are evil in His sight, which the conscience ought to have paid heed to, but which it

neglected. God has been forced to produce in us the effect which self-judgment ought to have produced before Him.

It would, however, be untrue to suppose that all afflictions are chastenings. Though they are sometimes, they are not always sent because of sin. There are things in the soul connected with the natural character, and which need to be corrected in order that we may live more in communion with God and glorify Him in all the details of life. What we do not know how to do with regard to these things God does for us; but there are many children of God who commit faults which their conscience ought to feel, and which they would discover if their souls were in the presence of God.

Jacob had to fight all his life against himself, because God had known his ways; and in order to bless him. God must wrestle with him too, and on this account also He was not pleased to reveal His name to him. It is totally different with Abraham. A thorn in the flesh was given to Paul to hinder evil; for in his case the danger did not arise from carelessness, but from the abundance of the revelations which he had.

Where there is a real affection which acknowledges God and all the relations in which He places us with Himself, it is absolutely impossible that a Christian should allow himself to marry a worldly person, without violating all his obligations towards God and towards Christ. If a child of God allies himself to an unbeliever, it is evident that he



leaves Christ out of the question, and that he does so voluntarily in the most important event of his life. It is just at such a moment that he ought to have the most intimate communion of thought, affection and interest with Christ; and he is totally excluded! The believer is yoked together with an unbeliever. He has chosen to live without Christ, he has deliberately preferred to do his own will and to exclude Christ rather than give up his will in order to enjoy Christ and His approbation. He has given his heart to another, abandoning Christ and refusing to listen to Him. The more affection there is, the more the heart is attached, the more openly has something been preferred to Christ. What a fearful decision! to settle to spend one's life thus, choosing for a companion an enemy of the Lord's. The influence of such a union is necessarily to draw the Christian back into the world. He has already chosen to accept that which is of the world as the most beloved object of his heart; and only things of the world please those who are of the world, although their fruit is death. (Rom. vi. 21-23.) "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." What a dreadful position! Either to fail in faithfulness to Christ, or to have constantly to resist just where the tenderest affection ought to have established perfect unity. The fact is, that unless the sovereign grace of God comes in, the Christian man or woman always yields and enters little by little upon a worldly walk. Nothing is

more natural. The worldly one has only worldly desires. The Christian, besides his Christianity, has the flesh: and further, he has already abandoned his Christian principles in order to please his flesh, by uniting himself to one who does not know the Lord. The result of such an alliance is that he has not a thought in common on the subject which ought to be most precious to his heart, with the person dearest to him in the world, and who is like a part of himself. They will have nothing but quarrels, for it is written. "~~How~~ Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) If not, they must first yield to worldliness and then take pleasure in it: but this sad result is lost sight of when they first place themselves in the position which renders it inevitable. The christian is drawn away little by little: he is not in communion with his Saviour, and he can find pleasure in the society of a person who is agreeable to him without thinking of Jesus. When he is alone he does not think of praying; and when he is with the one whom he loves, though his conscience or his Christian friends may warn him, he has no strength, and Christ has not sufficient power over his heart, to lead him to turn from his way and give up an affection which he knows to be disapproved of by the Lord. He binds himself more or less by other motives, such as a feeling of honour, sometimes, alas! by more detestable motives, such as pecuniary interest, and he sacrifices his conscience, his Saviour, his own soul as far as it depends upon him, and at

all events, the glory of God. That which at first was nothing more than a fancy, has become unrestrained will.

There is another remark which the history of this young person leads me to make. The first start of a converted soul, however sincere it may be, produces anything but the judgment of self and the flesh, which by unveiling to us our weakness, causes us to lay down our burden at the feet of Jesus. We then seek for strength only in Him, and we confide in Him alone. The confidence which a soul that knows and distrusts itself has in Jesus, is what gives it a lasting and solid peace, when it has understood, not only as a doctrine, but by the acceptance of the heart, that He alone is our righteousness. But we only arrive at this when we have been in the presence of God and have there made the discovery that we are only sin, that Christ is perfect righteousness and God perfect love. From that time we distrust ourselves, we fight against ourselves, and the flesh and the enemy have no longer the same power to deceive us.

I do not think that the young person of whom these pages speak, had been stripped of self. There are many Christians in this condition, and although we may all be exposed to the same dangers, yet such have more particularly to dread the wiles of the enemy, because they have not learnt how far the flesh deceives us, and do not know with how terrible a traitor we have to do. When we have come to a knowledge of this, although there may

be a lack of watchfulness, yet Christ has a larger place in the heart, and there is more calm, and less self.

Observe how deceitful the heart is, and how it loses all self-command when it departs from God, That poor young girl (when she was getting further and further into the slough, on the borders of which she had been trifling, to use her own expressions), asked her mother's friend to do all she could to remove every obstacle; and she, who was a woman of some piety, was surprised that A. should be disposed to unite herself to a worldly man. How wily and deceitful is our heart! What slaves does an idol make of us! For although we may endeavour to escape the danger, yet we take means to secure the accomplishment of the thing we desire, even while we flee from it! What a terrible thing it is to get away from God! This young person, before she was entangled through this affection, would have shrunk with horror from the idea of such an action. When the heart has abandoned God, it dreads man more even than God. The God who loved A., and who was beloved by her, must needs take her away from this world, where she had not courage to return to the right path. God took her to Himself. She died in peace, and through pure grace she triumphed.

The Christian, whilst enjoying peace in his last moments, should always feel that it is God whose hand is there. What a solemn lesson for those who wish to depart from God, and from His holy word,

in order to satisfy an inclination which it would have been easy to have overcome at first, but which, when cherished in the heart, becomes tyrannical and fatal! May God grant to the reader of these lines, and to all His children, to seek His presence day by day.

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## A FAITHFUL WORD.

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MY DEAR M.,

I don't forget you, and often do I hope that your soul is cleaving fast to the Lord Jesus, and feeding on the rich pasture which He provides for the lambs and sheep of His flock. Perhaps the most important thing for us is to keep our first love bright and real. You will serve Him whom you love. The great motive in the heart of Paul was the love of Christ: "*He loved me,*" he said; and that which the Lord Himself pressed thrice on Peter was, "*Lovest thou me?*" Full well does the Lord know what is the mighty spring of faithfulness to Himself, and that which stands higher in His estimation than intelligence or gift is simple love to Himself. He delights in the heart that values Himself. He could say of her who had taken her place at His feet to hear His word, that she had "*chosen the better part:*" He could say of her who anointed Him for His burial, rather than lavish the cost of the ointment on the poor, "*She hath wrought a good work on me,* and wheresoever the gospel should be preached, this also that she had

done should be preached, this also that she had done should be spoken of for a memorial of her."

On the other hand, what led Ephesus to leave off their first works? Simply the fact that they had left their first love. Ah, what a secret! How closely the Lord observes the pulsations of the heart, the movement of the affections! How sensitive He is to the smallest alteration of His throne there!

Yes, you will serve and obey gladly him whom you love. Does your heart ever become weary of the word and ways of your Lord and Saviour? Does it find less freshness, sweetness, and delight in learning of Him? Has the world come in to spoil and wither? Think of His love, and charge your soul to retain the sense of it as a treasure. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," said Jude to an apostatising Christendom: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God," said Paul to a suffering church; and easy it is to discover what furnished the wondrous impulse to that same apostle in his words, "I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, *for whom*," &c. The constraining love of Christ, apprehended in, and responded to by, our hearts, is that which alone can keep us true and faithful in a world where everything takes the character of a hindrance rather than a help in our heavenward course.

Dear young brother, you must be passing through much experience of the evil ways of this world in

your busy life in——. Remember that you have your own part to play upon the stage of life—as a witness for Christ. It is well to recollect that God is commenting on our life. He is our Biographer, as He was of Abel, Enoch, &c., in Heb. xi.; nor is any event omitted by His careful pen. Take care of the little things, and the great ones will not be overlooked. Rest not in present attainments. Thirst for more of God, as the hart for the water brooks. The Lord bless you. I trust all are well. My fond love to your family and all the saints. I am well, and working still for the glorious Master.

Yours in the Lord,

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### A SHINING FACE.

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To have Christ,—I mean practically to walk with Him and after Him, to have communion with the Father and the Son, to walk in unfeigned obedience and lowliness: to live in realised dependence on Christ and have His secret with us, and realise a Father's love; to have our affections set on things above, to walk in patience and yet confidence through this world, this is what we have to seek, and if we realise it we shall be a testimony, whether individually or collectively, but in possessing the things themselves, and they form us through grace, so that we are one (*i. e.* a testimony), but seeking or setting up to be it, does not. Moses did not seek to have his face shine nor *even know* when it did, but when he

had been with God it did so. A shining face never sees itself. The true heart is occupied with Christ, and in a certain sense and measure self is gone. The right thought is not to think of self at all—save as we have to judge it.

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### “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.”

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“Not only did the blessed Lord meet for us who believe all our sin as children of Adam, by His death, so as to clear us according to the glory of God from it all in His sight, but He perfectly glorified God himself in so doing. ‘Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.’ See John xvii. 4, 5.—Hence, as stated in both these passages, man in the person of Christ entered into the glory of God. But it was wrought for us, our sin was put away by it. Christ having glorified all God is, is our righteousness. We are thus the righteousness of God in Him. We have a positive title to enter into that glory as regards righteousness, though owning it all to be of grace (grace reigns through righteousness), and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, by the work and worth of Christ. ‘As He is, so are we in this world.’ But this took place in Him, as entering into, beginning in His person a new place of human existence, a risen man entered into glory. The power of eternal life was in it. Dead to the old scene and all that state of being and place and ground of relationship to God. He lives, in that He lives to God. Christ has thus His perfect place of acceptance as Man with God, and we in Him. He is gone in the power of divine life, save according to divine righteousness into divine glory.”

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“The Gospel proclaimed righteousness on God’s part, instead of requiring it from man, according to the law. Now the Holy Ghost could be the seal of that righteousness—He could come down upon the Man Christ, because He was perfectly approved of God. He was righteous—The Righteous One—He can come down upon us because we are made the righteousness of God in Christ.



## "NEARER."

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,"

Rom. xiii. 11.

TUNE,—*"I hear Thy welcome voice,"*

Not nearer being saved;  
For all who have believed  
Are saved; th' Eternal word is pledged;  
We cannot be deceived.

Rom. x. 9: John v. 24.

Not nearer having peace,  
For peace we have with God;  
Sweet peace and pardon through the price  
Of sin-atoning blood.

Rom. v. 1.

Not nearer being meet  
For our divine abode;  
E'en now, "as He is, so are we,"  
The righteousness of God.

1 John iv. 17.

Not nearer as to rank,  
Our title is secure;  
Now are we sons and heirs of God,  
Our heritage is sure.

1 John iii. 1-3.

But we are nearer now  
(Oh blissful, wondrous day!)  
The full redemption promised long,  
When death shall die away.

Eph. i. 14.

The body, though redeemed,  
Must wait till Jesus come;  
He'll call from earth and from the grave,  
His ransomed people home.

Rom. viii. 23.

High time 'tis to awake,  
With hope of bliss so dear;  
High time, with earth's dark night so spent,  
And heaven's bright morn so near.

Rom. xiii. 11, 12;

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