

ABRAHAM'S DOUBLE BLESSING

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A SERMON
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“I will bless thee....and thou shalt be a blessing.”
Genesis 12:2

THIS was to be the double result of Abraham's coming out from his own country and his father's house. Those Orientals clung with great tenacity to their native homes. We, in these latter ages, are not so restful, we think nothing of crossing the Atlantic and many think little of going to the other side of the globe. But those Easterns trembled, even, to cross the Euphrates or the Tigris. They spoke of the land beyond those rivers as “across the flood,” and a journey of two or three hundred miles seemed to them to be an event only second to death itself. Yet when the Lord said to Abraham, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew you,” he, “departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him.” His obedience was an act of heroic faith.

Now, brethren, in consequence of this obedience, Abraham obtained the double blessing of which our text speaks. He is called the father of the faithful, that is, the father of all such as believe in God, so that, if we truly believe in God, we shall do what Abraham as a believer did. Children are like their father. Believers are like the father of all believers, so that there will be a going out for them as there was for him.

We may not be called to actually leave our homes and our native land, but we shall have a great deal more troublesome task than that, for we are to be separated from the people among whom we dwell—to dwell among them, yet not to be of them—in the world, but not of the world. This is not an easy thing. It is far easier to become a monk, or a nun, and shut yourself up alone, than it is to live in the midst of ungodly people and yet to be yourself godly—to trade with the usual followers of commerce and not to fall into their business customs—to mix with the usual host of thinkers, yet not to think as they think, but to endeavor to think the thoughts of God and to obey the will of the Most High.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was the most perfect man among men. In no respect, in dress or in anything else, did He separate Himself from the rest of mankind by anything merely external. He ate and drank just as they did. He sat at their tables, slept in their houses, and talked with them by the way, yet was He always “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

All believers are called thus to live in the world a separated life, in obedience to the divine command, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” There is no necessity for us to wear either the broad-brimmed hat or the collarless coat, or anything whatever by which we shall be marked off from the rest of men. We are to be separated in reality rather than merely in appearance, to be separated by a higher tone of morals, to be separated by a truer life—a life with God, a life *in* God—to be separated by faith in the unseen, to be separated by an enthusiasm to which the rest of mankind will not pretend, which, indeed, they will even despise. This is the high, hard, holy, heavenly task to which believers in Christ are called. Oh, for grace to accomplish it!

In proportion as we accomplish it, the words of my text will come true to us, “I will bless thee....and thou shalt be a blessing.” As far as Abraham did not live the life of separation, so far he missed the blessing. You remember that he went down into Egypt, and you know what trouble he got into there, and he brought more trouble away with him. As I said, this morning (see exposition at end of sermon),

very likely Hagar was one of the slaves given to him by Pharaoh when he dismissed him and Sarah, and you know what trouble Hagar brought into the family. [Sermon #1869, Volume 31, *Hagar at the Fountain*]. If Abraham had lived the separated life and had not fallen into the customs of those round about him, he would not have had that sin and sorrow concerning Hagar. Nor would he have had that righteous rebuke from Abimelech, the king of Gerar, when again he had acted deceitfully with regard to his wife.

Whenever you see Abraham living alone before the Lord, you see a man of God, blessed of God, even as the Lord said, "I called him alone, and blessed him." But when he goes and links himself with others, he loses the fullness of the blessing and gets into serious trouble.

And you, Christian men and women, will find that as long as you keep close to your Lord and Master, you will enjoy His blessing. You may have cares and trials, but they shall be blessed cares and blessed trials. But if you go into the world and act as men of the world act—if you sow your wild oats, you will have to reap them. Depend upon it, the child of God will feel the weight of his Father's rod if he begins to play with the boys of the street. If he is not careful of his company, keeping with his Father's children, and careful of his life and conversation, doing and saying what his Father would have him do and say, he will find the rod fall heavily upon his shoulders, even as the Lord said of old to the children of Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

The blessings of which I am about to speak belong to those who live the separated life, to those who keep in the narrow way. Just in proportion as the grace of God helps us into that separated life and keeps us there, we shall be blessed and shall be made a blessing.

I. First, let us consider THE FIRST BLESSING promised to Abraham in our text, "I will bless thee."

Notice that the personal blessing comes first. You cannot be a blessing to others unless God has first blessed you. We do not encourage selfishness in anything, but we do say that you must fill your own pitcher before another man can drink out of it. You must have bread in your own hands before you can break it for the multitudes. It is no use for you to attempt to sow out of an empty basket, for that would be sowing nothing but wind. First of all, then, you must get the blessing yourself, for until it can be said to you, "I will bless thee," it cannot be said, "Thou shalt be a blessing."

What was the blessing which God gave Abraham? It was the blessing which He will give to all who live as Abraham lived and believe as Abraham believed. And first, Abraham had *the rest of faith*. He had no home except his tent—ever an uncomfortable style of dwelling—and no plot of land to call his own. He was a mere gypsy, moving about from place to place. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."

Yet, surely, there never was a man more restful than this same Abraham. Wherever you meet him, he stands out before you as a calm, quiet, noble figure. Jacob is always cunning, bargaining, plotting, and scheming. But Abraham has nothing of that sort of character, he is a plain, simple man, believing in God, and going about his business with that leisure which comes of perfect trustfulness. If God says to him, "Leave your country," he leaves it. Go and ask him, "Where are you going, Abraham?" He does not know. God has told him to go out and he is going.

The Canaanite is still in the land of promise, is he not afraid to go there? May not the inhabitants cut him off, directly, if he comes near them? Abraham is not afraid. God has told him to go to the land of Canaan and he feels that he has a right to be there. God causes a superstitious dread to fall upon those Canaanites, a voice seems to whisper in their heart, "Touch not mine anointed," and so Abraham dwells securely among them.

An invading host comes from a distance and carries away his poor nephew Lot, who has gone to live down Sodom way, that he may be more comfortable in a city. Abraham does not deliberate about his course of action, it is his business to set Lot free. And with the few young men who are around him, the old man pursues the five kings, drives them before him like stubble driven before the wind, and brings

back his nephew Lot and all the spoil. He never sets his hand to anything but he succeeds in it, and he never seems to worry himself about anything.

God's will is the one rule that he is always content to obey and he feels perfectly satisfied wherever he may be. Kings fall down before him, for he is a more truly royal personage than those who are draped in purple, and who wear crowns. They say that he is one of nature's true princes and so he is. God had made him a prince by one touch of faith, for it was faith that did it all. He believed in God and that believing made him truly great.

Do not say, dear friends, that this faith was only possible to Abraham. Brothers, sisters, it is possible to us also if we will have it. May God help us to believe the promise and not to be staggered at it through unbelief! If we will but trust God through thick and thin, through dark and light—if we will but believe God more than we believe our eyes or our ears—if we will but believe steadily, even though our own body seems as dead, that God will keep His promise to the very letter—And if we will, through that faith, always do the right, and never be daunted or turned aside, then shall our peace be like a river and our righteousness as the waves of the sea, and there shall be a kingly majesty about our character, simple and unadorned as it may be, and open as it may seem to be to the jests and sarcasms of an unbelieving age.

Whatever men may say, they will really respect and reverence the man who believes in God and lives as a man of faith should live. If you want perfect rest in this life—and it is worth more than thousands of precious jewels—if you would wear in your buttonhole the herb called heartsease—if you would go through the world content, and quiet, and happy, and free from care and fear, “trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” Has not God said, “I will bless thee”? He will bless you by means of your own faith, making you a peaceful, happy person while all the world besides seems to be up in arms, worried and anxious.

Beside the rest of faith, Abraham had the *victory of faith*. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” Abraham was not a fighting man, but when he was called to fight, he fought in real earnest, and his adversaries fell or fled before him. The victory of Abraham's faith, when he vanquished Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, was not only a victory on the battlefield, but a victory afterwards.

Those kings had taken the spoils of the kings of the cities of the plain, and had carried away all the booty, but Abraham recovered it all, so that he might have claimed it as his own, and even the king of Sodom said to him, “Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.” It was a fine pile, no doubt, and ordinary men do not look at such treasures without some kind of longing for them, but Abraham answered, “I have lifted up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from you a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.” “No,” says the patriarch, “what I receive shall come from God, and not from the king of Sodom.”

It was a real victory of faith for him to be able to act like that. It is a great thing for a Christian to conquer sin, but I reckon that it is a greater thing for him not to yield to that which looks dubious, or that which is selfish although it may be just. It is a victory for faith when the man says, “No, no. I might do this, or that, or the other, but I am a child of God, and therefore I shall not do it. I trust in God and I will not do it, lest at any time in my future life someone should say, ‘That was not acting as a Christian should act.’ No, I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet that belongs to the king of Sodom, lest thereby my God should be displeased or dishonored.” What a glorious victory Abraham had that day in the king's dale!

A Christian, if he lives to God by faith, will often have just such a victory as that. If he has not as much of this world's goods as others have, he will not fret and pine after them. He will say, “I am happy enough without them.” And if God should be pleased to give him riches, he will live above them and he will never let them get into his heart. “No,” he will say, “I am not enriched by these things. My treasure is of a higher and nobler kind.”

There are many men who could not be trusted to be rich, for if they were to attain to wealth, they would become proud and make an idol of their gold. But the true heir of heaven has received this blessing from God—that he knows, with Paul, both how to be abased and how to abound, how to be full and to be hungry. He has learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. And the man who has learned that lesson is a blessed man.

Another blessing which Abraham had, and which all believers may have, is this—*he had power with God*. Oh, that every one of us possessed such power and constantly used it! God was about to destroy the cities of the plain on account of their horrible lusts and He said to Himself, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” Was not he a blessed man concerning whom God asked that question?

God goes to Abraham and tells him what He is about to do. And Abraham, at once, with the power that he had with God, begins to plead with Him in that famous dialogue between the man of God and the God of the man. You know how he pleaded, “Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?” The next plea was, “Wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five?” Then he brought the number down to forty, to thirty, to twenty, and at last to ten righteous. Was it not a glorious thing for this man, this sheik, this Bedouin of the desert, to plead and wrestle thus with the eternal God?

Talk not to me about the grandeur of kings upon their thrones, Abraham speaking thus with God is greater than all of them put together. Tell me not of brave warriors returning from the fight amid the acclamations of the throng. This lonely man, grasping the arm of JEHOVAH and urging his suit for mercy for the people of these doomed cities, is a greater man than all mortals besides. They used to say of Luther, as he walked along the street, “There goes the man who can have of God anything he likes to ask.”

And there are some I know to whom God has given this same privilege. And if we will but walk alone with God and will fully trust Him, He will give us *carte blanche*. He *has* given it to us in those wondrous words of Christ, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

It is as if the silver keys of Paradise swung at the girdles of the saints. Have they not had the keys of the rain? Did not Elijah turn the key and shut up the clouds for three years and six months, and then turn it the other way and bring a blessed deluge on the land? Oh, if we have but faith, we shall have this high privilege of coming to the mercy seat, just when we will, and asking of our God according to our need, and His promise shall be fulfilled to each one of us, “I will bless thee.”

I must add, yet further, that Abraham had from God the great blessedness of *being sustained under trial*. Have you ever noticed a certain little record concerning Abraham? It is after he had offered up his son Isaac. That was the sharpest trial that could have befallen mortal man—to be commanded to go and offer up his own son, his only son, his beloved son, the son who had been miraculously given to him. But he, with stalwart faith, felt sure that God would keep His promise, and that He would raise Isaac from the dead if need be, so it was not for him to reason about the matter, but to do what seemed to be the terrible will of God.

Some little while after that great trial, it is written, “Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.” That is the short history of his long life. God told him that He would bless him, and He did. “The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.” What! when He commanded him to slay his son? Yes. He “had blessed him in all things.” What! When He took away his wife Sarah? Yes, for, “the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.” Perhaps, if his life had been without troubles, that sentence would not have been true.

Just look at this matter a moment, dear friends. When you and I, with all our cares, and trials, and poverty, and sufferings, and pains, shall get to our journey's end, if we have faith like Abraham's, it will be written of each one of us, “The Lord had blessed him in all things—blessed him in his troubles,

blessed him in those cruel tests of faith as they seemed to be, blessed him by sustaining him under them all.”

I think that if I were an old sailor, I should not like to have had a life on a sea of glass. If I were at home, say at seventy years of age, and my grandchildren had gathered around me to hear the story of my life, I would not like to have to sum it all up by saying, “Boys, I do not know anything about storms. I never was in one in my life. You see, I never went to sea without a favorable wind. Whenever I got on board ship, all storms ceased, and I had nothing to do but just to watch until I reached the port.” I expect the boys would ask, “But, grandfather, were there never any big waves?” “No, never.” “Were you never cast away on a rock?” “No, never, it was all smooth with me from beginning to end.”

There would be nothing to tell about a life like that and a man would not make much of a sailor that way. Or suppose it is one of our soldiers who, when he has retired from the army says, “I never smelt gunpowder.” I pray God that our soldiers may never have to fight, but still, a man will never make anything of a soldier if that is the fact with him.

And you and I will not make stalwart Christians without trials and troubles. And when we get to heaven, we shall not have so much for which to glorify God if we have had our bread and butter spread for us from the first day to the last, and have never had any lack of food, never any hard labor, never any stern affliction, never any bitter pain, never any deep distress. But how blessed are they who have done business in great waters, who have seen the white teeth of the storm furies and sailed through the very throat of death, and yet come out safely.

How blessed are they who have had much reason for fear, but who have had no fear, God having lifted them above it by the supernatural energy of His grace! So, brethren, you may often have blessing come to you, not in the shape of a rolled path all the way to heaven, but in the shape of a faith that endures to the end, so that you shall stand firm in every temptation and at the last shall enter into your rest and say at the end of all, “God has blessed me in all things, blessed be His holy name!”

Another special favor that Abraham had was *God's presence*. I think that the greatest blessing God ever gives to a man is His own presence. If I had my choice of all the blessings of this life, I certainly should not ask for wealth, for that can bring no ease. And I certainly should not ask for popularity, for there is no rest to the man upon whose words men constantly wait, and it is a hard task one has to perform in such a case as that.

But I should choose, as my highest honor, to have God always with me. Who would choose between the burning fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar and a bed of down, if God be equally with us in both cases? It matters not. We might be just as happy in the one case as in the other. If God be with us, if His divine love surrounds us, we carry our own atmosphere wherever we go, we take our own abode with us wherever we journey. And with Moses we can say, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.” That heart is full of heaven that is full of God. That man is blessed to all the intents of bliss who dwells in God and in whom God dwells. And that is the privilege of all who truly believe in Jesus, all who come out from the world and live a life of faith as Abraham did.

Bow your head, believer, and let the Lord God pronounce on you this benediction, “Surely, blessing I will bless thee.” Sorrowing, suffering, weary, burdened, yet receive this blessing as from God's own mouth, “I will bless thee.” Poor, despised, slandered, yet is the blessing not one whit curtailed. So, take it home with you and go on your way rejoicing.

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the text and consider THE SECOND BLESSING promised to Abraham. “Thou shalt be a blessing.”

When God has blessed any man, He makes that man to be a blessing to others. The Lord fills him that he may overflow with blessing for those around him. The Holy Spirit puts into the man the life of God that that life may flow out of him to others.

How, then, do we bless other men? I answer—genuine Christians bless other men *by their example*. I will give you one instance, sometimes an instance is better than an explanation. I suppose that there is hardly a person here who has not heard of that famous preacher of the Gospel, Mr. John Angell James. I

remember, thirty-three years ago, taking a journey from Cambridge to Birmingham, that I might be able to say that I had heard Mr. John Angell James preach. And I did hear him preach, greatly to my comfort and joy. You know that he wrote that book, *The Anxious Enquirer*, which has been the means of bringing so many to Christ, but did you ever hear how John Angell James came to be a Christian and a preacher?

He was engaged as a clerk in an office, as many of you may be, and he slept upon his master's premises. He had been accustomed, when he retired for the night, to get into bed without any prayer or any reading of the Scriptures, but there came into the same office a new clerk, a young man. James went upstairs, undressed himself as quickly as he could, and got into bed, when, to his surprise, the new clerk moved the candle, went to his box, took out his Bible, drew his chair up, sat down as if he was quite at home, and read a chapter.

Then, with equal deliberation, he knelt down at his bedside and prayed. He never said a word to John Angell James about not praying, but he did what was a great deal better, he himself prayed. Within a few months from that time, Mr. James was a converted man. Within two or three years, he was a minister of the Gospel, and I cannot help tracing the usefulness of the preacher to the decision of that young unknown clerk who dared to do the right thing come what might. "I will bless thee," said God to that young clerk, "and I will make you a blessing." I wonder whether, afterwards, he used to say to himself, "I thank God that I knelt down and prayed that night, because, by that simple act of mine, that man of God was brought to the feet of Jesus and tens of thousands were converted by his instrumentality"?

"I will make thee a blessing." Oh, that our example might be such that, wherever we go, we may be a blessing! Some of you, perhaps, have lived in very poor neighborhoods. You get into poverty and have to dwell in a back slum. As soon as you are converted, you want to move away and I do not blame you, who would like to remain there? At the same time, it seems a pity that the moment there is a lamp lit, we should take it out of the dark corner. That slum is where your example is needed, my brother. Where do you put the salt? Why, of course, where there is something that, without it, will rot! So there must be children of God who will say, "We mean to live here and drive the devil out. We do not intend to leave this corner, but we mean to stop here and fight the foe till God shall give us the victory."

Further, dear friends, those whom God uses are made a blessing *by their prayers*. Does anybody know the full extent of the blessings which come upon us in answer to the prayers of others? Unhappy is the man who has not somebody praying for him. But rich is that one who is daily the object of the prayers of saints.

O dear friends, if God has saved you, never stint your prayers for others. I ask a share in them, I count myself rich in having the prayers of so many, but how often am I gladdened and comforted when I know that there are thousands of Christian people who have pledged themselves never to pray either morning or evening without remembering me in their prayers! I thank them from the bottom of my heart, they can do me no greater kindness.

Pray for all ministers of Christ, and pray for all Christians, and pray day and night for this great wicked city of ours, steeped up to its throat in sin. God have mercy upon it! Get to your chamber, child of God, and bow your knee, and cry mightily unto the Most High, for these evil days sorely need it. If ever we needed intercessors, it is now. If John Knox's prayers saved Scotland—and they did—we need a man like he to save England and to bless our country at this present moment. You can be made a blessing by your intense and vehement prayers. Therefore, all of you who are believers "pray without ceasing."

Moreover, if God has blessed us, we ought to try to be made a blessing *by our ordinary life*. Sydney Smith, the witty clergyman, often said some very good things, and one I remember was, "Always make it a rule to make somebody happy every day, even if it is only by giving a child a farthing, or helping a poor woman to carry a parcel that is too heavy for her." There really is so much misery in the world that it is a pity for us to cause a child to cry, or even to cause a dog to go howling down the street. I think that

we ought to make everyone happy wherever we are, for our Master went about doing good to all sorts and conditions of men.

But certainly in our own family we who love the Lord should have the brightest eyes and the most cheering countenances. I know some professed Christians who are so dreadfully good, so painfully pious, that I cannot live near them. "Thou shalt not, thou shalt not," seems written across their very foreheads. All that we must not do they perfectly understand, but wherein there is anything of joy and delight and pleasure in this holy faith of ours, which came from our blessed joyous Savior—for such He was, though He was the Man of sorrows—all that they seem to forget.

Let it not be so among us, dear friends, but let us try with all our might to be a blessing to everybody, and most of all to be a blessing to those for whom nobody cares. Let us go out of our way to remember the forgotten, to help the helpless, to succor those who are in the deepest need. You know how it is in this world, everybody will give something to the person who does not need it, but why not give to the poor, and the needy, and the helpless? That is where our gifts should go most freely. These cannot make us a return, but we shall have a reward at the last if we do them good. Oh, for the faith which is truly a blessing because we endeavor to make other people happy wherever we may be!

"I will make thee a blessing." When this promise came to Abraham, surely the very essence of it was that Abraham was *to be made a blessing to the world by virtue of his connection with Jesus Christ*. Our Lord was descended from Abraham, "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Our Savior was a Jew. He took upon Himself the nature of that race, and therein Abraham became a blessing to the whole world.

And now, spiritually, we who believe are the children of Abraham. We come not into the covenant as they do who are merely descended from Abraham after the flesh, but we come in with Isaac, the child of the promise, born not after the flesh, but after the power of the Spirit. And so we become heirs of salvation by virtue of that faith which was in Abraham and which dwells also in us by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Beloved, if you and I are to be made a blessing to others, it must be by our bringing the Lord Jesus Christ to those whom we meet from day to day. Do not talk to a friend without speaking of your Savior. Do not be long in a house without introducing that dear name, there is so much of savor, of sweetness, of comfort, of healing, of life in that precious name of Jesus, that you cannot too often speak of it, or too frequently introduce it into all sorts of companies.

I heard, some time ago, of a man handcuffed and being taken away by the police for a term of imprisonment—a horrible wretch with a face that was scarcely human, a man who seemed as if he was cut out for a murderer—and as he stood in the station and few cared even to look at him, a little girl went near, and looking up to him, said, "Poor man, I pity you." He was wretch enough to utter some lewd and profane expression, and the child, astonished, ran back to her father. But she could not stop long. There seemed to be a charm to her about that wicked man, so she ran into the room again, and said, "Poor man, Jesus Christ pities you, He does." The police said to the governor of the jail, when handing over their prisoner, "That man will give you a world of trouble. He is the most horrible brute we ever came across, it took a great many of us to capture him."

The next morning he was found quiet and subdued, and during all the term of his imprisonment, there was not a better prisoner. And he went out of the jail a changed man. He told the chaplain that it was the little girl who had done it when she said that she pitied him and that Jesus Christ pitied him. If we would more often bring in that blessed name of Jesus, then would our text be fulfilled, "I will bless thee....and thou shalt be a blessing."

Oh, that we would all first come to Him and find the blessing that is treasured up in Him, and then go forth, and be a blessing to our own family and to all around us! O Lord, grant that it may be so, for Your dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON**GENESIS 12:1-7; 14:17-24; 22:15-18**

We will read two or three passages in the Book of Genesis concerning God blessing His servant Abraham. Turn first to the twelfth chapter.

Chapter 12, verse 1. *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:*

It was God's intention to keep His truth and His pure worship alive in the world by committing it to the charge of one man and the nation that should spring from him. In the infinite sovereignty of His grace, He chose Abraham—passing by all the rest of mankind—and elected him to be the depository of the heavenly light, that through him it might be preserved in the world until the days when it should be more widely scattered. It seemed essential to this end that Abraham should come right out from his fellow countrymen and be separate unto JEHOVAH, so the Lord said to him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.”

2-3. *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

There, you see, was the missionary character of the seed of Abraham, if they had but recognized it. God did not bless them for themselves alone, but for all nations, “In thee shall *all* families of the earth be blessed.”

4. *So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*

He had already attained a fine old age, but he had another century of life before him, which he could not, then, foresee, or expect. If, at his age, he had said, “Lord, I am too old to travel, too old to leave my country, and to begin to live a wandering life,” we could not have wondered. But he did not talk in that fashion. He was commanded to go and we read, “So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him.”

5-6. *And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. 6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.*

Fierce and powerful nations possessed the country. It did not seem a very likely place to be the heritage of a peace-loving man like Abraham. God does not always fulfill His promises to His people at once, else, where would be the room for faith? This life of ours is to be a life of faith, and it will be well rewarded in the end. Abraham had not a foot of land to call his own, except that cave of Machpelah which he bought from the sons of Heth for a burying place for his beloved Sarah.

7. *And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.*

Thus, you see, Abraham began his separated life with a blessing from the Lord his God.

Further on in his history he received a still larger blessing when he returned from his victory over the kings.

Genesis 14:17-19. *And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him,*

In the name of God, Melchizedek blessed Abraham. This mysterious personage, the highest type of our Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Abraham, “and without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.” “He blessed him,”—

19-20. *And said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

Abraham recognized the priest of God as his spiritual superior “and he gave him tithes of all.”

21. *And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.*

It was according to the rule of war that if persons who had made an invasion were afterwards themselves captured, then if the new captor gave up the persons, he was fully entitled to take the goods to himself.

22-23. *And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:*

The patriarch is greater than the king. He has a right to all his spoil, but he will not touch it, lest the glory of his God should thereby be stained. Abraham will have nothing but what his God shall give him. He will not take anything from the king of Sodom.

I like to see this glorious independence of the believer. “I have a right to this,” he says, “but I will not take it. What are mere earthly rights to me? My chief business is to honor the God of whose I am, and whom I serve. And if the taking of this spoil would dishonor Him, I will not take even so much as a thread or a shoe-latchet.”

24. *Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.*

“Though I am willing to give up my share of the spoil, that is no reason why these men should do the same.” Christian men ought not to expect worldlings to do what they cheerfully and willingly do themselves, and indeed, it is not much use to expect it, for they are not likely to do it.

Now let us read in the twenty-second chapter of this same Book of Genesis. Abraham had endured the supreme test of his faith and had, in full intent, offered up his son Isaac at the command of God, his hand being withheld from the actual sacrifice only by an angelic voice.

Genesis 22:15-17. *And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee,*

“Whenever I am engaged in blessing, I will bless thee. I will not pronounce a benediction in the which you shall not share, ‘In blessing I will bless thee,’”—

17-18. *And in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

See the result of one man’s grand act of obedience and note how God can make that man to be the channel of blessing to all coming ages. Oh, that you and I might possess the Abrahamic faith which thus practically obeys the Lord, and brings a blessing to all the nations of the earth!

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