

Spurgeon's Exposition: Genesis

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Spurgeon's Exposition Genesis

Genesis 1

Gen 1:1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

When that "beginning" was, we cannot tell. It may have been long ages before God fitted up this world for the abode of man, but it was not self-existent; it was created by God, it sprang from the will and the word of the all-wise Creator.

Gen 1:2. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

When God began to arrange this world in order, it was shrouded in darkness, and it had been reduced to what we call, for want of a better name, "chaos." This is just the condition of every soul of man when God begins to deal with him in his grace; it is formless, and empty of all good things. "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way."

Gen 1:2. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

This was the first act of God in preparing this planet to be the abode of man, and the first act of grace in the soul is for the Spirit of God to move within it. How that Spirit of God comes there, we know not, we cannot tell how he acts, even as we cannot tell how the wind bloweth where it listeth, but until the Spirit of God moves upon the soul nothing is done towards its new creation in Christ Jesus.

Gen 1:3-4. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

"Light be." "Light was." God had but to speak the word, and the great wonder was accomplished. How there was light before there was any sun, — for the sun was not created until the fourth day of the week — it is not for us to say. But God is not dependent upon his own creation. He can make light without a sun, he can spread the gospel without the aid of ministers, he can convert souls without any human or angelic agency, for he does as he wills in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

Gen 1:5. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

It is a good thing to have the right names for things. An error is often half killed when you know the real name of it; its power lies in its being indescribable; but as soon as you can call it "darkness," you know how to act towards it. It is a good thing also to know the names of truths, and the names of other things that are right. God is very particular in the Scripture about giving people their right names. The Holy Spirit says, "Judas, not Iscariot," so that there should be no mistake about the person intended. Let us also always call persons and things by their right names: "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." "And the evening and the morning were the first day." Darkness first and light afterwards. It is so with us spiritually; first darkness, then light. I suppose that,

until we get to heaven, there will be both darkness and light in us; and as to God's providential dealings, we must expect darkness as well as light. They will make up our first day and our last day, till we get where there are no days but the Ancient of Days.

Gen 1:6-8. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

"The firmament" — an expanse of air in which floated the waters which afterwards condensed, and fell upon the earth in refreshing showers. These waters above were divided from the waters below. Perhaps they were all one steamy conglomeration before, but now they are separated. Note those four words, "and it was so." Whatever God ordains always comes. You will find that it is true of all his promises that, whatever he has said, shall be fulfilled to you, and you shall one day say of it all, "and it was so." It is equally certain concerning all his threatenings that what he has spoken shall certainly be fulfilled, and the ungodly will have to say "and it was so." These words are often repeated in this chapter. They convey to us the great lesson that the word of God is sure to be followed by the deed of God. He speaks, and it is done.

Gen 1:9-13. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

Having attended to the air, God further exercised his power by setting the earth in order. Observe the remarkable fact that, no sooner had God made the dry land appear, than it seemed as if he could not bear the sight of it in its nakedness. What a strange place this world must have looked, with its plains and hills and rooks and vales without one single blade of grass, or a tree, or a shrub; so at once, before that day was over, God threw the mantle of verdure over the earth, and clad its mountains and valleys with forests and plants and flowers, as if to show us that the fruitless is uncomely in God's sight, that the man who bears no fruit unto God is unendurable to him. There would be no beauty whatever in a Christian without any good works, and with no graces. As soon as ever the earth appeared, then came the herb, and the tree, and the grass. So, dear brethren, in like manner, let us bring forth fruit unto God, and bring it forth abundantly, for herein is our heavenly Father glorified, that we bear much fruit.

Gen 1:14-19. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

Whether the sun and moon are here said to be absolutely created, or whether they were only created so far as our planet was concerned by the dense vapours being cleared away so that the sun and moon and stars could be seen, is a matter of no consequence at all to us. Let us rather learn a lesson from them. These lights are to rule, but they are to rule by giving light. And, brethren, this is the true rule in the Church of God. He who gives most light is the truest ruler, and the man who aspires to leadership in the Church of God, if he knows what he is at, aspires to be the servant of all by laying himself out for the good of all, even as our Saviour said to his disciples, "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." The sun and moon are the servants of all mankind, and therefore do they rule by day and by night. Stoop, my brothers, if you wish to lead others. The way up is downward. To be great, you must be little. He is the greatest who is nothing at all unto himself, but all for others.

Gen 1:20-23. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

There was no life in the sea or on the land until all was ready for it. God would not make a creature to be unhappy. There must be suitable food to feed upon, and the sun and moon to cheer and comfort ere a single bird shall chirp in the thicket or a solitary trout shall leap in the stream. So, after God has given men light, and blessed them in various ways, their spiritual life begins to develop to the glory of God. We have the thoughts that soar like fowl in the open firmament of heaven, and other thoughts that dive into the mysteries of God, as the fish dive in the sea, and these are after-development, after-growths of that same power which at the first said, "Let there be light."

Gen 1:24-25. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that

creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

There is as much wisdom and care displayed in the creation of the tiniest creeping insect as in the creation of leviathan himself. Those who use the microscope are as much amazed at the greatness and the goodness of God as those are who use the telescope. He is as great in the little as he is in the great. After each day's work, God looks upon it, and it is well for us every night to review our day's work. Some men's work will not bear looking at, and tomorrow becomes all the worse to them because today was not considered and its sin repented of by them. But if the errors of today are marked by us, a repetition of them may be avoided on the morrow. It is only God who can look upon any one day's work, and say of it, as a whole, and in every part, that it is "good." As for us, our best things need sprinkling with the blood of Christ, which we need not only on the lintels and side posts of our house, but even on the altar and the mercy-seat at which we worship God.

Gen 1:26-28. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

God evidently meant the two persons, male and female, to complete the man, and the entireness of the manhood lies in them both. The earth is completed now that man has come upon it, and man is completed when the image of God is upon him, when Christ is formed in him the hope of glory, but not till then. When we have received the power of God, and have dominion over ourselves, and over all earthly things, in the power of God's eternal Spirit, then are we where and what God intends us to be.

Gen 1:29-30. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

Now you see God's commissariat. He has not made all these creatures in order to starve them, but he has supplied them with great variety and abundance of food, that their wants may be satisfied. Does God care for the cattle, and will he not feed his own children? Does he provide for ravens and sparrows, and will he suffer you to lack anything, O ye of little faith? Observe that God did not create man until he had provided for him neither will he ever put one work of his providence or of his grace out of its proper place, but that which goes before shall be preparatory to that which follows after.

Gen 1:31. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

Taken in its completeness, and all put together, God saw that it was very good. We must never judge anything before it is complete.

Genesis 2

Gen 2:1-8.

Everything was ready for man's use, every fruit-bearing tree for his nourishment, every creature to do his bidding, for it was the will of God that he should "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." God did not place the man formed in his image, after his likeness, in an unfurnished house or an empty world, and leave him to provide for himself all that he required but he prepared everything that man could possibly need, and completed the whole plan by planting "a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed."

Gen 2:9. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

That tree of life in the midst of the earthly paradise was to be symbolic of another tree of life in the paradise above, from which the children of God shall never be driven as Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden.

Gen 2:10-14. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

That river in Eden also reminds us of the "pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the

Lamb," of which we read almost at the end of the Revelation that was given to John in Patmos. Thus the beginning and the end of the Bible call our attention to the tree of life and the river of life in the paradise below and the better paradise above.

Gen 2:15. And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden; of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

There was to be occupation for man even in paradise, just as they who are before the throne of God in glory "serve him day and night in his temple." Idleness gives no joy, but holy employment will add to the bliss of heaven.

Gen 2:16-17. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden, thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Apparently, Adam was not forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, though, after his fall, he was cast out of Eden, as God said, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." He might freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden except one: "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." It was a slight prohibition, yet the test was more than man, even in a state of innocence, was able to endure, and, alas! his failure involved all his descendants, for he was the federal head of the human race, and "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men." Happily, there is another federal Head, and therefore we read, "For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

Genesis 3

Gen 3:1. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

He began with a question. How much of evil begins with questioning! The serpent does not dare to state a lie, but he suggests one: "Has God refused you all the fruit of these many trees that grow in the garden?"

Gen 3:2-3. And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

Eve had begun to feel the fascination of the evil one, for she softened down the word of God. The Lord had said concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. A little of the spirit of doubt had crept into Eve's mind, so she answered, God hath said, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Gen 3:4-5. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

The serpent insinuated that God selfishly kept them back from the tree, lest they should grow too wise, and become like God himself. The evil one suggested ambition to the woman's mind, and imputed wicked designs to the ever-blessed and holy God. He did not say any more; the devil is too wise to use many words. I am afraid that the servants of God sometimes weaken the force of the truth by their verbosity, but not so did the serpent when he craftily suggested falsehoods to Mother Eve; he said enough to accomplish his evil purpose, but no more.

Gen 3:6. And when the woman saw —

Sin came into the human race by the eye; and that is the way that Christ comes in, by the eye of faith, the spiritual eye. "Look unto me, and be ye saved," is the counterpart of this word, "When the woman saw "

Gen 3:6. That the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

This was a distinct act of rebellion on the part of both of them. It may seem a small thing; but it meant a great deal. They had cast off their allegiance to God; they had set up on their own account; they thought they knew better than God, and they imagined they were going to be gods themselves.

Gen 3:7. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

All they had gained by their sin was a discovery of their nakedness. Poor creatures, how the serpent laughed as his words were fulfilled, "your eyes shall be opened"! They were opened, indeed; and Adam and Eve did know good and evil. Little could they have

dreamed in what a terrible sense the serpent's words would come true.

Gen 3:8. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day:

No doubt, when they had heard the voice of the Lord before, they had run to meet him, as children do to a father when he comes home "in the cool of the day." But now, how different is their action!

Gen 3:8. And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

What fools they were to think that they could hide themselves from God! The fig leaves were to hide their nakedness, and now the trees themselves were to hide them from God.

Gen 3:9-11. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

In tones of mingled pity and rebuke he asked, "Where art thou?"

Note the calm majesty of every word. Here is no human passion, but divine dignity: "And he said," —

God comes to judge his fallen creature, yet he deals kindly with him. The Lord will have it from his own lips that he has offended; he summons no other witness.

Gen 3:12. And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

There is no sign of true confession here. Adam had been an unfallen creature a few hours before, but, now, he had broken the commandment of the Lord, and you can see how completely death was brought into his moral nature; for if it had not been so, he would have said "My God, I have sinned, canst thou and wilt thou forgive me?" But instead of doing so, he laid the blame for his sin upon his wife, which was an utterly mean action: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." He almost seemed to lay the blame upon God because he had given him the woman to be with him. He was guilty of unkindness to his wife and of blasphemy against his maker, in seeking to escape from confessing the sin which he had committed. It is an ill sign with men when they cannot be brought frankly to acknowledge their wrong-doing.

This is a clear proof of his guilt, first, that he throws the blame on her whom he was bound to love and shield; and next, that he throws the blame on God himself: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree." Ah, me, what mean creatures men are when sin comes in, and shame follows at its heels!

Gen 3:13. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

How often we throw the blame of our sin on the devil, who certainly has enough to bear without the added guilt of our iniquity! What Eve said was true; but it was not a sufficient reason for her sin. She should not have been beguiled by the serpent.

Oh, that question! How far reaching it is! By her action, and her husband's, the flood-gates had been pulled up, and the flood of sin had been let loose upon the world. They had struck a match, and set the world on fire with sin. And every one of our sins is essentially of the same nature, and has in it, substantially, the same mischief. Oh, that at any time when we have sinned, God would ask each one of us the question, "What is it that thou hast done?"

Still, you see, there is no confession of guilt, but only the attempt to push the blame off upon somebody else. The Lord God did not ask the serpent anything, for he knew that he was a liar, but he at once pronounced sentence upon him: —

Gen 3:14-15. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Here was the first proclamation of the gospel. Strange to say, while God pronounces a curse upon the enemy of mankind, he is uttering a blessing upon the whole of those who belong to Christ, for HE is that seed of the woman, and all that belong to him are a simple-minded, child-like people, children of the woman. Their opponents are the seed of the serpent, crafty, cunning, wise, full of deceit; and there is enmity between these two seeds. Christ is the Head of the one seed, and Satan is the head of the other; and our Lord Jesus Christ has had his heel bruised, and he suffered in that bruising of his heel; but he has broken the head of the dragon, he has crushed the power of evil, he has put his potent foot upon the old serpent's head.

And, now, there is no creature so degraded as that once bright angel, who is now the devil. He is always going about with serpentine wriggling, Seeking to do more mischief. On his belly does he go, and still is dust his meat. That which is foul, material, carnal, he

delights in. And his head is bruised, blessed be the name of the Woman's promised seed! The old serpent's head is bruised with a fatal bruising, while the wounded heel of our Saviour is the joy and delight of our hearts.

Gen 3:16-18. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

He had been accustomed to eat of the fruit of the many trees of paradise now he must come down, and eat "the herb of the field." He is lowered from royal dainties to commoner fare.

How obliquely fell the curse! Not, "Cursed art thou," as the Lord said to the serpent; but, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake."

Some creature had to die in order to provide them with garments, and you know who it is that died in order that we might be robed in his spotless righteousness. The Lamb of God has made for us a garment which covers our nakedness so that we are not afraid to stand even before the bar of God.

Gen 3:19. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground;

"Thou shalt get thy life out of the ground till thou thyself shalt go into the ground."

Gen 3:19-21. For out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

This was a very significant gospel action. The Lord took away from Adam and Eve the withered fig-leaves; but put on them the skins of animals, to show, in symbol, that we are covered with the sacrifice of Christ. The giving up of a life yielded a better covering than the growth of nature; and so today the death of Christ yields us a better covering than we could ever find in anything that grew of our poor fallen nature. Blessed be God for thus thinking of us when providing raiment for our first parents!

Gen 3:22. And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

That would have been a horrible thing, for man to be incapable of death, and so to continue for ever in a sinful world. It is by passing through death that we come out into the realm of perfectness.

Gen 3:23-24. Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

"O, what a fall was there, my countrymen, Then I, and you, and all of us fell down;" while sin triumphed over us; yet even the fall by Adam's sin was not without the promise of a gracious recovery through the last Adam, the Lord from heaven. Well does Dr. Watts set forth the contrast between the fall of the angels and the fall of man, —

"Down headlong from their native skies The rebel angels fell,

And thunderbolts of flaming wrath Pursued them deep to hell."

"Down from the top of earthly bliss Rebellious man was hurl'd;

And Jesus stoop'd beneath the grave To reach a sinking world."

He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took our nature, and died in our stead. May we trust to his death to bring us life, and thereby be saved from the consequences of the fall!

Genesis 7

Gen 7:1. And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark;

Notice that the Lord did not say to Noah, "Go into the ark," but "Come," plainly implying that God was himself in the ark, waiting to receive Noah and his family into the big ship that was to be their place of refuge while all the other people on the face of the earth were drowned. The distinctive word of the gospel is a drawing word: "Come." Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are

heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” and he will say to his people at the last, “Come, ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” “Depart” is the word of justice and judgment, but “Come” is the word of mercy and grace. “The Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark;” —

Gen 7:1. For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

Therefore God drew a distinction between him and the unrighteous, for he always hath a special regard for godly people.

Gen 7:2-3. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

Of the clean creatures which might be offered in sacrifice to God you see that there was a larger proportion than there was of the unclean, that there might be sufficient for sacrifice without the destruction of any species. The unclean beasts were mostly killers and devourers of others, and therefore their number we to be less than that of the clean species. Oh, that the day might soon come when there would be more of clean men and women than of unclean, when there would be fewer sinners than godly people in the world, though even then there would be the ungodly “by two” like the unclean beasts.

Gen 7:4. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

It is the prerogative of the king to have the power of life and death, and it is the sole prerogative of the King of kings that — “He can create, and he can destroy.” But what destructive power is brought into operation because of human sin! Sin must be a very heinous thing, since God, who despiseth not the work of his own hands, will sooner break up the human race, and destroy every thing that liveth rather than that sin should continue to defile the earth. He has destroyed the earth once by water because of sin, and he will the second time destroy it by fire for the selfsame reason. Wherever sin is, God will hunt it; with barbed arrows will he shoot at it; he will cut it in pieces with his sharp two-edged sword, for he cannot endure sin. Oh, how foolish are they who harbour it in their own bosoms, for it will bring destruction to them if they keep it there!

Gen 7:5. And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

Here was positive proof of his righteousness, in that he was obedient to the word of the Lord. A man who does not obey God’s commands may talk about righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith, but it is clear that he does not possess it, for faith works by love, and the righteousness which is by faith is proved by obedience to God. “Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him,” and so proved that he was righteous before God.

Gen 7:6. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

He was nearly five hundred years old when he began to preach about the flood, — a good old age to take up such a subject. For a hundred and twenty years he pursued his theme, — three times as long as most men are ever able to preach, and now at last God’s time of long-suffering is over, and he proves the truthfulness of the testimony of his servant by sending the flood that Noah had foretold.

Gen 7:7-8. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons’ wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

This largest and most complete menagerie that was ever gathered together was not collected by human skill; divine power alone could have accomplished such a task as that.

Gen 7:9. There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

They “went in.” Noah had not to hunt or search for them, but they came according to God’s plan and purpose, even as, concerning the salvation which is by Christ Jesus, his people shall be willing to come to him in the day of his power; with joyfulness shall they come into the ark of their salvation.

Gen 7:10-11. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Perhaps the world was in its prime, when the trees were in bloom, and the birds were singing in their branches, and the flowers were blooming on the earth, “the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

Gen 7:12-13. And the rain was upon the earth forty day and forty nights. In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham,

and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

These eight persons are very carefully mentioned. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," "and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up" — or, shut up — "my jewels," as he was about to do in the case. In similar fashion, God makes a very careful enumeration of all those who believe in him, precious are they in his sight, and they shall be preserved when all others are destroyed.

Gen 7:14. They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

"Every bird of every sort," that is, every kind of bird; they are all mentioned over again. God makes much of salvation, oh, that we also did! We may recount and rehearse the story of our rescue from universal destruction, and we need not be afraid or ashamed of repeating it. As the Holy Ghost repeats the words we have here, you and I may often tell out the story of our salvation, and dwell upon the minute particulars of it, for every item of it is full of instruction.

Gen 7:15-16. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

Now the jewels are all in, and therefore the casket is closed.

Gen 7:17. And the flood was forty days upon the earth;

Just as it had been foretold, for God's providence always tallies with his promises or with his threats. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?"

Gen 7:17. And the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

You can see it begin to move until it is afloat. The same effect is often produced on us; when the flood of affliction is deep, then we begin to rise. Oh, how often have we been lifted up above the earth by the very force that threatened to drench and drown us! David said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," and many another saint can say that he never was floated until the floods were out, but then he left the worldliness with which he had been satisfied before, and he began to rise to a higher level than he had previously attained.

Gen 7:18-19. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

If Moses had meant to describe a partial deluge upon only a small part of the earth, he used very misleading language; but if he meant to teach was that the deluge was universal, he used the very word which we might have expected that he would use. I should think that no person, merely by reading this chapter, would arrive at the conclusion that has been reached by some of our very learned men, — too learned to hold the simple truth. It looks as if the deluge must have been universal when we read that not only did the waters prevail exceedingly upon the earth, but that "all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven;" that is, all beneath the canopy of the sky, "were covered." What could be more plain and clear than that?

Gen 7:20-23. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

This is the counterpart of what will follow the preaching of the gospel those who are in Christ shall live, shall rise, and reign with him for ever but none of those who are outside of Christ shall so live. "Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

Gen 7:24. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

Genesis 8

Gen 8:1. And God remembered Noah,

Noah had been shut up in the ark for many a day, and at the right time God thought of him, practically thought of him, and came to visit him. Dear heart, you have been shut out from the world now for many days, but God has not forgotten you. God remembered Noah, and he remembers you.

Gen 8:1. And every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark:

Does God remember cattle? Then he will certainly remember men made in his own image. He will remember you, though you think yourself the most worthless one on the face of the earth: "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark."

Gen 8:1. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged;

Winds and waves are wholly under God's control. I suppose that this was a very drying wind, so the waters began to turn to vapor, and gradually to disappear. It is God who sends the winds; they seem most volatile and irregular, but God sends them to do his bidding. Blow it east, or blow it west, the wind comes from God; and whether the waters increase or are assuaged, it is God's doing. Are the waters very deep with you, dear friend? God can dry them up, and, singularly enough, he can stop one trouble with another, he can dry up the water with the wind. I have known him very strangely with his people, and when they thought they were quite forgotten, he has proved that he remembered them, and both the winds of heaven and the waters of the sea have had to work their good. There is not an angel in heaven but God will make him to be a servant to you if you need him; there is not a wind in any quarter of the globe but God will guide it to you if it is necessary; and there are no waves of the sea but shall obey the Lord's will concerning you.

Gen 8:2. The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;

God works upwards, and stops the windows of heaven. He works downwards, and stays the breaking up of the fountains of the deep.

"He everywhere hath sway,

And all things serve his might."

Be not afraid; he can open the windows of heaven, and pour down abundant blessings for you, and he can let down the cellar-flaps of the great deep, and stop its flowing fountains.

"When he makes bare his arm,

What shall his work withstand?"

Gen 8:3-5. And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

God told Noah when to go into the ark, but he did not tell him when he should come out again. The Lord told Noah when to go in, for it was necessary for him to know that; but he did not tell him when he should come out, for it was unnecessary that he should know that. God always lets his people know what is practically for their good. There are many curious points on which we should like to have information, but God has not revealed it, and when he has not revealed anything, we had better not try to unravel the mystery. No good comes of prying into unrevealed truth. Noah knew that he would come out of the ark one day, for was he not preserved there to be a seed to keep the race alive? Noah was not told when he should be released, and the Lord does not tell you when your trouble will come to an end. It will come to an end; therefore wait, and be patient, and do not want to know the time of your deliverance. We should know too much if we knew all that will happen in the future. It is quite enough for us if we do our duty in the present, and trust God for the rest. Still, I think that Noah must have been very pleased when he felt the ark grating at last on the mountains of Ararat. He could not build a cook for his big ship; but God had prepared a berth for it on the mountain side. Now, as he looked out, he could see, here and there, a mountain top rising like an island out of the great expanse of water.

Gen 8:6-7. And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro,

Sometimes alighting on the ark; then flying away again.

Gen 8:7-10. Until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days;

I wonder whether Noah sent out these creatures on the Sabbath mornings. The mention of seven days, and the resting in between

seems to look like it. Oh, dear friends, sometimes people send out a raven on the Lord's day morning, and it never brings them anything. Send out a dove rather than a raven; come to the house of God with quiet, gentle, holy expectation, and your dove will come back to you. It may be that it will bring you something worth bringing one of these days, as Noah's dove brought to him.

Gen 8:10-11. And again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

The waters were abated as far as the fruit trees; not only the tallest forest trees, but some of the fruit trees were uncovered from the water. The dove had plucked off "an olive leaf." Perhaps you have seen a picture of the dove carrying an olive branch in its mouth, which, in the first place, a dove could not pluck out of the tree, and in the second place, a dove could not carry an olive branch even if she could pluck it off. It was an olive leaf, that is all. Why cannot people keep to the words of Scripture? If the Bible mentions a leaf, they make it a bough; and if the Bible says it is a bough, they make it a leaf.

Gen 8:12. And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

Noah could read something from that leaf that the dove brought to him, but he learned more when she did not return to him. He knew that she had found a proper resting-place, and that the earth was clear of the flood.

Gen 8:13. And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth:

That was a happy New Year's day for Noah. He was glad to find himself at rest once more, though not yet at liberty.

Gen 8:13. And Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

Why did not Noah come out? Well, you see, he had gone in by the door, and he meant to come out by the door, and he that opened the door for him, and shut him in, must now open the door for him, and let him out. He waits God's time, and we are always wise in doing that. You lose a great deal of time by being in a hurry. Many people think they have done a great deal when they have really done nothing. Better take time in order to save time. Slow is sometimes faster than fast. So Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked out, but he did not go out till God commanded him to do so.

Gen 8:14. And in the second month,

Nearly two months Noah waited for the complete drying of the earth.

Gen 8:14. On the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

"The face of the ground was dry" in the first month; "the earth was dried," the second month. Noah might have thought it was dry enough before; but God did not think so, there was enough mud to breed a pestilence, so Noah must wait until God had made the earth ready for him.

Gen 8:15-16. And God spoke unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark,

Noah must wait till God speaks to him. Oh, that some people would wait for God's command, but they will not! He shall bless thy going out and thy coming in if thou wilt go forth and come in when he bids thee. "Go forth," says the Lord, "Go forth of the ark."

Gen 8:16-19. Thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

That was a very wonderful procession, it was the new beginning of everything upon the earth. Whatever evolution or any other folly or evil of man may have done, everything had to begin again over. Everybody was drowned save these great fathers of the new age, and all must begin from this stock.

Gen 8:20. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Common sense would have said, "Spare them, for you will want every one of them." But grace said, "Slay them, for they belong to God. Give Jehovah his due." I have often admired that widow of Sarepta. When she had but a handful of meal, she made a little cake for God's prophet first, but then God multiplied her meal and her oil. Oh, if we would but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all things should be added unto us! Out of the small stock he had, Noah took of the clean beasts, and of the clean fowls, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Gen 8:21. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour;

Noah's faith was pleasing to God. It was Noah's confidence in a bleeding sacrifice that gave him acceptance with the Lord. God thought upon his Son, and that great Sacrifice to be offered long afterwards on the cross, and he "smelled a sweet savour."

Gen 8:21. And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

God always speaks comfortable words to those who bring an acceptable sacrifice. If you would hear the voice of a divine promise, go to the atoning blood of Jesus. If you would know what perfect reconciliation means, his to the altar where the great Sacrifice was presented.

Gen 8:22. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

They never have ceased. He have this year had a long and dreary winter; it looked as if spring would never come. Only a few days ago, the chestnuts were just beginning to turn green, and then there came the little spikes, and now you can see them in full flower. How faithfully God fulfils his covenant with the earth! How truly will he keep his covenant with every believing sinner! Oh, trust ye in him, for his promise will stand fast for ever!

Gen 8:15-21. And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour;

Until then, the earth had been obnoxious to Jehovah. He had put it away from him as a foul thing, drowned beneath the flood; but after the offering of Noah's sacrifice, the Lord smelled "a savour of rest."

Gen 8:20

A savour of rest, —

Gen 8:21-22. And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground. And any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

Thus we see what we may expect so long as the earth remains, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Now let us read a few verses from Jeremiah's prophecy.

So that you all live under a covenant, — a gracious covenant, and, by virtue of it, the day succeeds the night, the summer follows the winter, and the harvest in due course rewards the labour of the seedtime. All this ought to make us long to be under the yet fuller and higher covenant of grace, by which spiritual blessings would be scoured to us, — an eternal day to follow this earthly night, and a glorious harvest to follow this time of seed-sowing.

Genesis 9

Gen 9:8-10. And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, sayings, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

Happy fowls, and happy cattle, and happy beasts of the earth to be connected with Noah, and go to come under a covenant of preservation and we, — though only worthy to be typified by these creatures which God had preserved in the ark, — are thrice happy to be in the same covenant with him who is our Noah, our rest, our sweet savour unto God.

Gen 9:11-17. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token for a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the

cloud. And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, —

What a wonderful expression that is! It is similar to that remarkable declaration of Jehovah, recorded in Ex 12:13. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” The blood was not to be sprinkled inside the house where the Israelites might be comforted by a sight of it, but outside the house, where only God could see it. It is for our sake that the rainbow is set in the cloud, and we can see it there; yet infinite mercy represents it as being there as a refreshment to the memory of God: “The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it;”-

Gen 9:16. That I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

So, when my eye of faith is dim, and I cannot see the covenant sign, I will remember that there is an eye which never can be dim, which always sees the covenant token; and so I shall still be secure notwithstanding the dimness of my spiritual vision. For our comfort, we must see it; but for our safety, blessed be God, it is only needful that he should see it.

Gen 9:17. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

Now let us read what the Lord says, through the prophet Isaiah, concerning this covenant.

Genesis 12

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

Gen 12:1. 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.”

Gen 12:2-3. 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.”

Gen 12:4. 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.”

Gen 12:5-6. 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. 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 of the sons of Heth for a burying-place for his beloved Sarah.

Gen 12:7. 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

Gen 14:17. 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,"—

One who exercised both the kingship and the priesthood, the only person that we know of who did this, and who, therefore, is a wonderful type of that marvelous King-Priest of whom we read in the 110th Psalm, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Gen 14:19-20. 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."

It must have been peculiarly refreshing to Abraham to be met by a man of kindred spirit, and one whom he recognized as his superior. No doubt he was weary, though triumphant; and so, just then, the Lord sent him special refreshment, and, beloved, how sweet it is to us when the greater Melchizedek meets us! Jesus Christ our great King-Priest, still meets us, and brings us bread and wine. Often, the very symbols on his table have been refreshing to us, but their inner meaning has been far more sustaining and comforting to our spirit. There is no food like the bread and wine that our blessed Melchizedek brings forth to us, even his own flesh and blood. Well may we give him tithes of all that we have. Nay more, we may say to him, "Take not tithes, O Lord, but take all!"

Gen 14:21. 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.

They were all Abraham's by right as the spoils of war.

Gen 14:22-23. 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 believing man. "I have a right to this," says he, "but I will not take it; what are mere earthly rights to me? My chief business is to honour the God whom I am, and whom I serve; and if the taking of this spoil would dishonour him, I will not take even so much as a thread or a shoe-latchet."

Sometimes, a child of God will find himself cast, through force of circumstances, into very curious companionship. For the sake of Lot, Abraham had to go and fight the enemies of the king of Sodom, and sometimes, in fighting for religious liberty, we have had to be associated with persons from whom we differ as much as Abraham differed from the king of Sodom but right must be fought for under all circumstances. Yet, sooner or later, there comes a crucial test in which our true character will be discovered. Shall we personally gain anything by this association? We loathe it even while we recognize that it is needful for the time being, but we have not entered it for the sake of personal gain.

Gen 14:24. 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.

They had a right to it. What we do ourselves, we do not always expect others to do. There is a higher code of morals for the servant of God than for other men; and we may often think of what they do, and not condemn them, although we could not do the same ourselves, for we are lifted into a higher position as the servant of the Lord.

Genesis 15

Gen 15:1-3. After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

Perhaps he did not doubt the promise, but he wanted to have it explained to him. He may have wondered if it meant that one born in his house, though not his son, was to be his heir; and that, through him, the blessing would come. He takes the opportunity of making an enquiry, that he may know how to act. At the same time, there does seem to be a clashing between Abraham's question, "What wilt thou give me?" and the declaration of God, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." There is a great descent from the language of the Lord to that of the most stable believer, and when you and I are even at our best, I have no doubt that, if all could be recorded that we think and say, some of our fellow-believers would feel that the best of men are but men at the best, and that God's language is after a nobler fashion than ours will ever be, till we have seen his face in glory.

Gen 15:4-5. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come out of thine own bowels shall be their heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Now was his faith tried indeed, he had no child, he was himself old, and his wife also was old, yet the Lord's promise was, "So shall thy seed be" as the stars of heaven. Could he believe it? He did.

Gen 15:6. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Oh, what a blessing to learn the way of ample faith in God! This is the saving quality in many a life. Look through Paul's list of the heroes of faith; some of them are exceedingly imperfect characters' some we should hardly have thought of mentioning, but they had faith; and although men, in their faulty judgment, think faith to be an inferior virtue, and often scarcely look upon it as a virtue at all, yet, in the judgment of God, faith is the supremest virtue. "This," said Christ, "is the work of God," the greatest of all works, "that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." To trust, to believe, this shall be counted to us for righteousness even as it was to Abraham.

Gen 15:7-8. And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

What! Abraham, is not God's promise sufficient for thee? O father of the faithful, though thou dost believe, and art counted as righteous through believing, dost thou still ask, "Whereby shall I know?" Ah, beloved! faith is often marred by a measure of unbelief; or, if not quite unbelief, yet there is a desire to have some token, some sign, beyond the bare promise of God.

Gen 15:9-11. And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

Here is a lesson for us. Perhaps you have some of these unclean birds coming down upon your sacrifice just now. That raven that you did not lock up well at home, has come here after you. Eagles and vultures, and all kinds of kites in the form of carking cares, and sad memories, and fears, and doubts, come hovering over the sacred feast. Drive them away; God give you grace to drive them away by the power of his gracious Spirit!

Gen 15:12. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

He had asked for a manifestation, a sign, a token, and, lo, it comes in the "horror of great darkness." Do not be afraid, beloved, if your soul sometimes knows what horror is. Remember how the favored three, on the Mount of Transfiguration, "feared as they entered into the cloud;" yet it was there that they were to see their Master in his glory. Remember what the Lord said to Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem and his people, They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." That is the right spirit in which to receive prosperity, but as for adversity, rejoice in it, for God often sends the richest treasures to his children in wagons drawn by black horses. You may except that some great blessing is coming nigh to you when a "horror of great darkness" falls upon you.

Gen 15:13. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

It was to be a long while before the nation should enter upon its inheritance. Here is a promise that was to take four hundred years to ripen! Some of you cannot believe the promise if its fulfillment is delayed for four days; you can hardly keep on praying, if it takes four years; what would you think of a four hundred years promise? Yet it was to be so long in coming to maturity because it was so vast. If Abraham's seed was to be like the stars of heaven for multitude, there must be time for the increase to come.

Gen 15:14-17. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

True emblems of the Church of God with her smoke and her light, her trying affliction, yet the grace by which she still keeps burning and shining in the world.

Gen 15:18-21. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

He mentions the adversaries to show how great would be the victories of the race that should come and dispossess them. Let us always look upon the list of our difficulties as only a catalogue of our triumphs. The greater our troubles, the louder our song at the last.

Genesis 18

Gen 18:17-19. And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Abraham is called "the friend of God." It was not merely that God was his Friend; that was blessedly true, and it was a great wonder of grace; but he was honoured to be called "the friend of God"-one with whom God could hold sweet converse, a man after his own heart, in whom he trusted to whom he revealed his secrets. I am afraid there are not many men of Abraham's sort in the world even now; but, wherever there is such a man, with whom God is familiar, he will be sure to be one who orders his household aright. If the Lord is my Friend, and if I am indeed his friend, I shall wish him to be respected by my children, and I shall endeavor to dedicate my children to his service. I fear that the decline of family godliness, which is so sadly remarkable in these days, is the source of a great many of the crying sins of the age; the Church of God at large would have been more separate from the world if the little church in each man's house had been more carefully trained for God. If you want the Lord to confide in you, and to trust you with his secrets, you must see that he is able to say of you what he said of Abraham, "he will command his children and his household after him."

Gen 18:20-22. And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

He was in no hurry to close that blessed interview; when he had once come into the Lord's immediate presence, he lingered there. Those who are friends of God like to be much in their Lord's company.

Gen 18:23. And Abraham drew near,

There is nothing like coming very close to God in prayer: "Abraham drew near." He was about to use his influence with his great Friend; not for himself, but for these men of Sodom, who were going to be destroyed. Happy are those who, when they are near to God, use the opportunity in pleading for others, ay, even for the most wicked and abandoned of men.

Gen 18:23-25. And said, 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? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Abraham bases his argument upon the justice of God; and when a man dares to do that, it is mighty pleading, for, depend upon it, God will never do an unjust thing. If thou darest to plead his righteousness, his infallible justice, thou pleadest most powerfully.

Gen 18:26-30. And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

This time the patriarch has advanced by ten; before, it was by fives. Pleading men grow bolder and braver in their requests. A man who is very familiar with God will, by-and-by, venture to say that which, at the first, he would not have dared to utter.

Gen 18:31-32. And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

He went no farther than to plead that Sodom might be spared if ten righteous persons could be found in it. I have heard some say that it was a pity Abraham did not go on pleading with God; but I would not dare to say so. He knew better when to begin and when to leave off than you and I do; there are certain restraints in prayer which a man of God cannot explain to others, but which he, nevertheless, himself feels. God moves his servants to pray in a certain case, and they do pray with great liberty and manifest power. Another case may seem to be precisely like it: yet the mouth of the former suppliant is shut, and in his heart he does not feel that he can pray as he did before. Do I blame the men of God? Assuredly not; the Lord dealeth wisely with his servants, and he tells them, by gentle hints, which they quickly understand, when and where to stop in their supplications.

Gen 18:33. And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

We know that the angels went down to Sodom, where they were received by Lot, and despitefully used by the Sodomites. We will continue our reading at the twelfth verse of the next chapter.

Genesis 19

Gen 19:12. And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:

Let me bid every Christian man to look about him, among all his kith and kin, to see which of them yet remain unconverted. Let your prayers go up for them all: "Son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters."

Gen 19:13-14. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

"The old man is in his dotage," said they; "he always was peculiar, he never acted like the rest of the citizens; he came in here as a stranger, and he has always been strange in his behavior."

Gen 19:15-16. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

I have always felt pleased to think that there were just hands enough to lead out these four people, Lot, and his wife, and their two daughters. Had there been one more, there would have been no hand to lay hold of the fifth person; but these two angels, with their four hands, could just lead these four persons outside the doomed city. God will always have agents enough to save his elect; there shall be sufficient gospel preaching, even in the darkest and deadest times, to bring his redeemed out of the City of Destruction. God will miss none of his own.

Gen 19:17. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

Perhaps the old man's legs trembled under him; he felt that he could not run so far; and, beside, the mountain seemed so bleak and dreary, he could not quite quit the abodes of men.

Gen 19:18-21. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saying my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for thou hast spoken.

I think that I have said to you before that this sparing of Zoar is an instance of the cumulative power of prayer. I may liken Abraham's mighty pleading to a ton weight of prayer, supplication that had a wonderful force and power. Lot's petition is only like an ounce of prayer. Poor little Lot, what a poor little prayer his was! Yet that ounce turned the scale. So, it may be that there is some mighty man of God who is near to prevailing with God, but he cannot quite obtain his request; but you, poor feeble pleader that you are, shall add your feather's weight to his great intercession, and then the scale will turn. This narrative always comforts me I think that Zoar was preserved, not so much by the prayer of Lot, as by the greater prayer of Abraham which had gone before; yet the mighty intercession of the friend of God did not prevail until it was supported by the feeble petition of poor Lot.

Gen 19:22. Haste thee, escape thither;

The hand of justice was held back until God's servant was safe. There can be no destruction of the world, there can be no pouring out of the last plagues, there can be no total sweeping away of the ungodly till, first of all, the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, and taken to a place of security. The Lord will preserve his own. He lets the scaffold stand until the building is finished; then, it will come down fast enough.

Gen 19:22-28. For I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that, which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

What must Abraham's meditations have been! What should be the meditations of every godly man as he looks towards Sodom, and sees the smoke of its destruction? It might do some men great good if they would not persistently shut their eyes to the doom of the wicked. Look, look, I pray you, upon that place of darkness and woe where every impenitent and unbelieving spirit must be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord! Look till the tears are in your eyes as you thank God that you are rescued from so terrible a doom! Look till your heart melts with pity for the many who are going the downward road, and who will eternally ruin themselves unless almighty grace prevent!

Genesis 22

Gen 22:1. And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt-

That is, "God did test or try"-

Gen 22:1-2. Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son,

"But, Lord, I have two sons, Ishmael and Isaac."

Gen 22:2. Thine only son,

"But, Lord, both Ishmael and Isaac are my sons, and each of them is the only son of his mother."

Gen 22:2. Isaac, whom thou lovest,

See how definitely God points out to Abraham the son who is to be the means of the great trial of his father's faith: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest";-

Gen 22:2. 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.

It was usually the way, in God's commands to Abraham, to make him sail under sealed orders. When he was first bidden to leave his country and his kindred, and his father's house, he had to go to a land that God would shew him. They have true faith who can go forth at God's command, not knowing whither they are going. So Abraham did, and now the Lord says to him, "Take Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Gen 22:3. And Abraham rose up early in the morning,-

Obedience should be prompt, we should show our willingness to obey the Lord's command by not delaying: "Abraham rose up early in the morning,"-

Gen 22:3. And saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

All the details are mentioned, for true obedience is very careful of detail. They who would serve God aright must serve him faithfully in little things as well as in great ones. There must be a saddling of the ass, a calling of the two young men as well as Isaac, and a cleaving of the wood for the burnt offering. We must do everything that is included in the bounds of the divine command, and do it all with scrupulous exactness and care. Indifferent obedience to God's command is practically disobedience, careless obedience is dead obedience, the heart is gone out of it. Let us learn from Abraham how to obey.

Gen 22:4. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

His was deliberate obedience; he could bear suspense, thinking over the whole matter for three days, and setting his face like a flint to obey his Lord's command.

Gen 22:5. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

Abraham did not deceive the young men, he believed that he and Isaac would come to them again. He believed that though he might be compelled to say his son, "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Abraham bade the young men stay where they were, they must not see all that he was to do before the Lord. Oftentimes, our highest obedience must be a solitary one; friends cannot help us in such emergencies, and it is better for them and better for us that they should not be with us.

Gen 22:6. 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;

That knife was cutting into his own heart all the while, yet he took it. Unbelief would have left the knife at home, but genuine faith takes it.

Gen 22:6-8. And they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

Abraham here spoke like a prophet; in fact, throughout this whole incident, he never opened his mouth without a prophetic utterance; and I believe that, when men walk with God, and live near to God, they will possibly even without being aware of it, speak very weighty words which will have much more in them than they themselves apprehend. Is it not written, concerning the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, "his leaf also shall not wither"? Not only shall his fruit be abundant, but his casual word, "his leaf also shall not wither." So was it with it Abraham. He spoke like a prophet of God when he was really speaking to his son in the anguish of his spirit, and in his prophetic utterance we find the sum end substance of the gospel: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." He is the great Provider, and he provides the offering, not only for us, but for himself, for the sacrifice was necessary to God as well as to man. And it is a burnt offering, not only a sin-offering but an offering of a sweet savour unto himself. "So they went both of them together." Twice we are told this, for this incident is a type of the Father going with the Son and the Son going with the Father up to the great sacrifice on Calvary. It was not Christ alone who willingly died, or the Father alone who gave his Son, but they went both of them together," even as Abraham and Isaac did here.

Gen 22:9. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there,

See him pulling out the large, rough, unhewn stones that lay round about the place, and then fling them up into an altar.

Gen 22:9-10. And laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

So that, in intent and purpose, he had consummated the sacrifice, and therefore we read in Hebrew 11:17, "By faith Abraham, when

he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son." He had virtually done so in the esteem of God though no trace of a wound could be found upon Isaac. How often God takes the will for the deed with his people! When he finds them willing to make the sacrifice that he demands, he often does not require it at their hands. If you are willing to suffer for Christ's sake, it may be that you shall not be caused to suffer and if you are willing to be a martyr for the truth, you may be permitted to wear the martyr's crown even though you are never called to stand at the stake, the scaffold or the block.

Gen 22:11. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

Abraham always gives the same answer to the Lord's call, "Here am I."

Gen 22:12. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

The needful test had been applied, and Abraham's faith had endured the trial. God knows all things by his divine omniscience, but now he knew by this severe test and trial which he had applied, that Abraham really loved him best of all. Notice that the angel says, "Now I know that thou fearest God." I do not think that the gracious use of godly fear has ever been sufficiently estimated by the most of us; here, the stress is not laid upon the faith, but upon the filial fear of Abraham. That holy awe, that sacred reverence of God is the very essence of our acceptance with him." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." This is a very different thing from slavish fear; it is a right sort of fear, the kind of fear that love does not cast out, but which love lives with in happy fellowship.

Gen 22:13. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

Here is another type of our Saviour's great sacrifice on Calvary,-the ram offered in the place of Jesus. How often do you and I have our great Substitute very near to us, yet we do not see him because we do not lift up our eyes and look. "Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns." So, if you lift up your eyes, and look the right way, you will see the great sacrifice close by you held fast for you, even as this ram was caught to die instead of Isaac. Oh, that you may have grace to turn your head in the right direction, and look to Christ and live!

Gen 22:14. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

God will foresee; "God will"-as we usually say, "provide," which is being interpreted, fore-see. He will have everything ready against the time when it will be needed. He who provided the ram for a burnt offering in the place of Isaac will provide everything else that is required; and you may depend upon it that he who, in the greatest emergency that could ever happen, provided his only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die as the Substitute for sinners, will have foreseen every other emergency that can occur, and will have fore-provided all that is needful to meet it. Blessed be the name of Jehovah-jireh!

Gen 22:15-16. 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,

"Whenever I am engaged in blessing, I will bless thee. I will not pronounce a benediction in the which thou shalt not share: 'In blessing I will bless thee,'"—

"Because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself."

Gen 22:16-18. For because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, 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.

There stands the old covenant, the covenant of grace made with Abraham concerning his seed. Paul writes to the Galatians, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." It is in Christ that all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. If there is a nation that has not yet heard the gospel, it must hear it, for so the promise stands, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." We may look for a glorious future from the preaching of Christ throughout every land, for so the covenant was made with Abraham because he had obeyed God's voice.

God had been good to Abraham before that time, for he was his beloved friend, but now he lifts him up to a higher platform altogether, and makes him a greater blessing than ever. It may be that God is about to test and try some of you in order that he may afterwards make you to be greater and more useful than you have ever been before.

Gen 22:17-18. 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!

Gen 22:19. So Abraham returned unto his young men,

As he said that he would.

Gen 22:19. And they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

So the Lord bore his servant through this great trial, and blessed him more than he had ever blessed him before.

Genesis 24

Our subject is the value of divine guidance, and we shall, therefore, read two passages of Scripture illustrating the truth which we hope to enforce.

Gen 24:1. And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

Happy man that can say that, who has a blessing everywhere! And yet Abraham had his "but," for as yet Isaac was unmarried, and perhaps he little dreamed that for twenty years afterwards he who was to build the house of Abraham was to remain childless. Yet so it was. There was always a trial for Abraham's faith, but even his trials were blessed, for "God blessed Abraham in all things."

Gen 24:2. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

According to the Eastern manner of swearing.

Gen 24:3. And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, And the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

This holy man was careful of the purity of his family; he knew what an ill-effect a Canaanitish wife might have upon his son, and also upon his offspring. He was, therefore, particularly careful here. I would that all parents were the same.

Gen 24:4-5. But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

The servant was very careful. Those that swear too readily they know not what, will ere long swear till they care not what. Better still is it for the Christian to remember the word of Christ, "Swear not at all, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath." Doubtless the doctrine of the Saviour is that all oaths of every sort are lawful to the Christian, but if they ever be taken, it should be with deep circumspection and with earnest prayerfulness, that there be no mistake about the matter.

Gen 24:6. And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.

He knew that God had called him and his kindred to inherit the land of Canaan, and, therefore, he was not willing that they should go back to their former dwelling-places.

Gen 24:7. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

What simple faith! This was the very glory of Abraham's faith; it was so simple, so childlike. It might be many miles to Padanaram, but it does not matter to faith. "My God will send his angel." Oh! we are always making difficulties and suggesting hardships; but if our faith were in lively exercise, we should do God's will far more readily. "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Brethren, let us be of good heart and of good courage in all matters, for doubtless the angel of God will go before us.

Gen 24:8-11. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son

thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter. And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

Now I think I may freely say that this looks something like what we call “a wild-goose chase.” He was to go and find a wife for a young man left at home; he knew nothing of the people among whom he was to sojourn, but he believed that the angel of God would guide him aright. What ought he to do, now he had come near to the time when the decision must be made? He should seek counsel of God, and observe that he did so.

Gen 24:12-14. And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

I do not know that he is to be imitated in setting a sign to God; perhaps not, but he did his best; he left the matter with God, and a thing is always in good hands when it is left with him. There is a deal of wisdom in this sign, however. Why did he not say, “The damsel that shall first offer me to drink”? No; she might be a little too forward, and a forward woman was not a fit spouse for the good and meditative Isaac. He himself was to address her first, and then she must be ready, with all cheerfulness, to do far more than he asks. She was to offer him to drink, and draw water for his camels; she would thus not be afraid of work, she would be courteous, and she would be kind, and all these meeting in one might show him, and by this test he might very wisely discover, that she was a fitting woman for Isaac, and might become his spouse.

Gen 24:15. And it came to pass, before he had done speaking,

Ay, he did not know that promise, “While they are yet speaking I will hear”; but God keeps his promises before he makes them, and, therefore, I am sure he will keep them after he has made them.

Gen 24:15-16. That, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

And so on; I need not read the rest of the story, because we now find that, through earnest prayer, the good servant has been rightly led. We will now turn to another passage where we shall have another instance of a difficult case, where another person put his case before the Lord, and sought guidance and found it.

Genesis 27

Gen 27:1-4. And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat: that my soul may bless thee before I die.

A sad misfortune to lose the sight of the eyes! How greatly, how much more than we do, ought we to thank God for the prolongation of our sight, and it has been well remarked by one of our greatest men of science “that we seldom hear Christian men thank God as they should for the use of spectacles in these modern times.” A philosopher has written a long paper concerning the blessings which he found in old age from this invention, and we, enabled still to read the Word when our sight decays, should be exceedingly grateful for it. After all, with all alleviations, it is a very great trial to be deprived of one’s eyesight, but those who are in good company. Whilst they have some of the greatest divines in modern history, they have here one of the best of men — one of the patriarchs whose eyes were dim so that he could not see. He seems to have had some sort of mistiness of soul about this time which was far worse, and so he desired to give the blessing to Esau, whom God had determined should never have it.

Gen 27:5-11. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may

bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man:

He does not appear to have raised any objection to what she proposed on moral grounds, but only on the ground of the difficulty of it and the likelihood of being discovered. It only shows how low the moral sense may be in some who, nevertheless, have a desire towards God and have a faith in him. In those darker days we can hardly expect to find so much of the excellences of the spirit as we ought to find now-a-days in those who possess the spirit of God fully.

Gen 27:12-15. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

And Esau, altogether a man of the world, one very like the sons of other families around about, took care to adorn himself in goodly raiment. It seems always more becoming to the worldling than the Christian. Jacob had a suit good enough for this occasion, but the worldly man had not. I would that those who fear God were less careful about the adornments of their persons. There are far better ornaments than gold can buy — ornaments neat, and raiment comely — may we all possess them.

Gen 27:16-19. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn;

Which, whatever may be said about it, was a plain lie, and is not to be excused upon any theory whatever. It was as much a sin in Jacob as it would be in us, except that perhaps he had less light, and the general cunning of those who surrounded him may have made it more easy with him and a less tax on conscience for him to do this than it would be in our case. "I am Esau," said he. Why is all this recorded in the Bible? It is not to the credit of these men. No! the Holy Spirit does not write for the credit of man: he writes for the glory of God's grace. He writes for the warning of believers now, and these things are examples unto us that we may avoid the blots and flaws in good men, and may thereby ourselves become more what we should be.

Gen 27:19-20. I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.

Here he draws God's name into this lie, And this is worse still.

Gen 27:21-29.

So he tied his own hands: he could not revoke his blessing, or, had he done so, he would have brought the curse upon himself.

Genesis 32

Gen 32:1. And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

Jacob had just come out of a great trouble. God's gracious interposition had delivered him out of the hand of the angry Laban, — Laban the churl, who cared for Jacob only for what he could get out of him.

When he left the promised land, he had a vision of angels, ascending and descending upon the ladder, as if to bid him farewell. Now that he is going back, the angels are there again to speed him on his way home to the land of the covenant, the land which the Lord had promised to give to Abraham and his seed.

What an encouragement the visit of these angels must have been to Jacob after the strife which he had had with Laban! But, dear friends, angels often come to meet us, though we know it not. As in the old classic story, the poor man said, "This is a plain hut, but God has been here," so we may say of every Christian's cottage, "Though it be poor, an angel has come here," for David says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." As the angels of God met Jacob, I trust that, if you have come here after some stern battle, and trial, and difficulty, you may find the angels of God meeting you here. They do come into the assemblies of the saints. Paul tells us that the woman ought to have her head covered in the assembly "because of the angels," that is, because they are there to see that all things are done decently and in order.

Gen 32:2. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

The marginal reading is "Two hosts, or, camps." The angels of the Lord were encamping round about the man who feared him, though shore had been much in his character and conduct which the Lord could not approve.

He gave it a name to commemorate God's having sent the angels, and called it "two camps" or "two hosts."

The angels of God are always round about his people. It was well for Jacob to be reminded of that fact, for he was about to pass into another trouble. John Bunyan truly says, —

"A Christian man is seldom long at ease;

When one trouble's gone another doth him seize."

Certainly it was so with Jacob; for, after he had escaped from Laban, he knew that he had to meet his brother Esau, whom he had so greatly wronged so many years before. Then it was that "the angels of God met him." Go on your way in peace and safety, beloved believer, for God's hosts are all around you. You do not go unattended at any single moment of your life. Better than squadrons of horse and regiments of foot are the ministering spirits who are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Jacob was about to enter upon a great trial, and therefore he received a great comfort in preparation for it. God knows when to send angels to his servants; and when they come, it is often as the forerunners of a trial which is to follow them.

Gen 32:3. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother into the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

After a visit from angels, afflictions and trials often come. John Bunyan wrote, as I have often reminded You, "The Christian man is seldom long at ease, When one trouble's gone, another doth him seize;" and though the rhyme is rather rough, the statement is perfectly true. Full often, we are hardly out of one trial before we are into another.

He is out of one trouble with Laban; now he is into another with Esau.

Well did John Bunyan say. —

"A Christian man is seldom long at ease;

When one trouble's gone, another doth him seize."

Gen 32:3-5. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Sier, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

This was a wise and proper action on the part of Jacob, for he had grossly wronged his brother, and it was right for him to make advances toward a reconciliation. He prayed to God for help, but he also used such means as he could, — the means that ought always to be used when any of us realize that we have done an injury to others. We should even be willing to humiliate ourselves in order to make peace. I think that, when Christians differ from one another, there should be a holy emulation between them as to which shall be the first to give way, and which will give way the more to the other. How many quarrels might soon be ended if there were this spirit of conciliation among all professing Christians. I have heard of one, who had offended a brother Christian during the day; possibly, the brother-Christian had offended him quite as much. But the first one saw that the sun was going down, so he turned to seek his friend, that he might say to him, "Friend so-and-so, I was wrong in being angry today." Half-way between their two houses, they met, and each of them said, "I was just coming to say that I was wrong." There is no need of any arbitrator when each of the disputants is willing to say, "I was wrong," and the trouble is soon over when that point is reached. In this case, it certainly was Jacob's duty to make some reparation to his brother, whether Esau accepted it or not.

It has been judged by some that Jacob, in sending such a message to Esau, acted unworthily and unbelievably; but I think we are not called upon to censure the servants of God in points wherein they are not condemned in Scripture. The elder brother, according to all Eastern customs, was the lord of the family, and Jacob had so grossly injured Esau that it well became him to walk very humbly and to abound in courtesy towards him. Besides, I hope we shall never imagine that the highest faith is inconsistent with the greatest prudence, and that we shall never forget that there is such a book in the Bible as the Book of Proverbs, which contains counsels of wisdom for daily life. That Book of Proverbs is placed not far from the Song of Solomon, which treats of high spiritual communion, as if to teach us that the next-door neighbour to the wisdom that cometh from above which walks with God, is that prudence which God gives to his servants for their dealings with men. He that walks with God will not be a fool, for God is the source of all wisdom, and the man who walks with him will learn wisdom from him.

Gen 32:4-5. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have

sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

This is very respectful language, and rather obsequious, too; but when a man knows that he has done wrong to another, he ought to be prepared to humble himself to the injured individual; and, though it happened long ago, yet Jacob really had injured his brother Esau, and it was but right that, in meeting him again, he should put himself into a humble position before him. There are some proud people who, when they know that they have done wrong, yet will not own it, and it is very hard to end a quarrel when one will not yield, and the other feels that he will not either. But there is good hope of things going right when Jacob, who is the better of the two brothers, is also the humbler of the two.

It is very proper, when we have offended other people, and especially if we feel that we have done them wrong, as Jacob had done to Esau, that we should use the humblest terms concerning ourselves, and the best terms we can about those whom we have offended. Yet I must say that I do not like these terms that Jacob uses; they do not seem to me to be the right sort of language for a man of faith: "My lord Esau, Thy servant Jacob saith thus." What business had God's favored one to speak "thus" to such a profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright? Surely, there was more of the Jacob policy than there was of the Israel faith in this form of speech.

Gen 32:3-5. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Sier, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

This was a wise and proper action on the part of Jacob, for he had grossly wronged his brother, and it was right for him to make advances toward a reconciliation. He prayed to God for help, but he also used such means as he could, — the means that ought always to be used when any of us realize that we have done an injury to others. We should even be willing to humiliate ourselves in order to make peace. I think that, when Christians differ from one another, there should be a holy emulation between them as to which shall be the first to give way, and which will give way the more to the other. How many quarrels might soon be ended if there were this spirit of conciliation among all professing Christians. I have heard of one, who had offended a brother Christian during the day; possibly, the brother-Christian had offended him quite as much. But the first one saw that the sun was going down, so he turned to seek his friend, that he might say to him, "Friend so-and-so, I was wrong in being angry today." Half-way between their two houses, they met, and each of them said, "I was just coming to say that I was wrong." There is no need of any arbitrator when each of the disputants is willing to say, "I was wrong," and the trouble is soon over when that point is reached. In this case, it certainly was Jacob's duty to make some reparation to his brother, whether Esau accepted it or not.

Gen 32:6-7. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and alas he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed:

And well he might be, for an angry brother, with four hundred fierce followers, must mean mischief.

"Four hundred men with him"! "That must mean mischief to me, and my company. Surely, he is coming thus to avenge himself for the wrong I did him, long ago. My brother's heart is still hot with anger against me." So, "Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed."

Gen 32:6-8

This fear and distress were sad proofs of want of faith on Jacob's part; for where there is strong faith, there may be a measure of human fear, but it will not go to the length of being "greatly afraid and distressed," as he was. In this respect he falls short of his grandfather Abraham; yet, nevertheless, he acts wisely, first with common prudence, and next with uncommon prayerfulness.

Gen 32:7-8. And he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

This is characteristic of Jacob. He was a man of plans and arrangements, a man of considerable craftiness, which some people nowadays call "prudence." He used means, and he sometimes used them a little too much. Perhaps he did so in this case; but, at the same time, he was a man of faith, and therefore he betook himself to prayer.

This man Jacob was always planning, and scheming; he was the great progenitor of the Jews, who are still preeminent in bargaining. See how he plots and arranges everything to the best advantage. I blame him not for this, yet, methinks, he is to be blamed that he did not pray first. Surely, it would have been the proper order of things if the prayer had preceded the planning; but Jacob planned first, and prayed afterwards. Well, even that was better than planning, and not praying at all; so there is something commendable in his action, though not without considerable qualification.

He used the means that he judged to be the best under the existing circumstances, and I believe that God intends us always to use our best wits and judgment, and then to fall back upon him in confiding prayer just as if we had done nothing at all. Do everything as if God were not about to help you, and then trust in God as if you had done nothing at all. An Arab said to Mahomet, "I let my camel run loose, and trusted it to Providence," but Mahomet replied, "You should have tied it up first, and then trusted it to Providence;" and Jacob was very much of that mind and a very sensible mind it was, not at all inconsistent with the very best of faith.

Gen 32:9. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD

Jacob uses that August name "Jehovah" — "the Lord" —

Gen 32:9-10. Which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

Not even one servant had he with him when he fled away across the river, he was alone and unattended, and now he was coming back at the head of a great family, with troops of servants, and an abundance of cattle, and sheep, and all things that men think worth having. How greatly God had increased him, and blessed him! He remembers that lonely departure from the home country, and he cannot help contrasting it with his present prosperity.

Gen 32:9-12

A prayer most humble, most direct in its petitions, and also full of faith. That was a grand argument for him to use: "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." This is one of the mightiest pleas that we can urge in praying to God: "Do as thou hast said. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." O brethren, if you can remind God of his own promise, you must win the day, for promised mercies are sure mercies.

"As well might he his being quit,

As break his promise, or forget."

"Hath he said, and shall he not do it? "Only for this will he be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, and we must take care that we call his promise to mind, and plead it at the mercy-seat.

Note the humility of Jacob's prayer. We cannot expect our supplications to speed with God unless we put them upon the footing of free grace by acknowledging that we have no merit of our own which we can plead before him.

Yet notice also how Jacob reminds God of his promise, "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." That is the very pith and marrow of prayer when we can quote the Lord's promise, and say to him, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." You have a strong plea to urge with God when you can say to him, "Thou saidst," for he is a God who cannot lie.

Gen 32:11-13. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;

There he is, planning again! And this time, perhaps, since he has prayed over the matter, he is planning more wisely than he did before, intending now to try to appease his brother's anger by a munificent "present for Esau his brother."

Gen 32:12

That is always the most powerful plea when we can quote God's own promise: "Thou saidst," —

Gen 32:13-16

That also was a very sensible arrangement on Jacob's part, so that his brother might have time to think how he should act, for angry men often do in a hurry what they would not do if they had a little time given them for consideration. Jacob knows this, so he lets Esau's anger have an opportunity to cool down while he watches drove following drove.

Gen 32:13-21

If Jacob had been true to his faith in God, he would have dispensed with these very prudent preparations; for, after all, the faithfulness of God was Jacob's best defense; it was from God that his safety came, and not from his own plotting, and planning, and scheming. There are some of you, dear brethren, who have minds that are naturally given to inventions, and devices, and plans, and plots, and I believe that, where this is the case, you have more to battle against than those have who are of an ample mind, and

who cast themselves more entirely upon the Lord. It is a blessed thing to be such a fool that you do not know anyone to trust in except your God. It is a sweet thing to be so weaned from your wisdom that you fall into the arms of God. Yet, if you do feel that it is right to make such plans as Jacob made, take care that you do what Jacob also did. Pray as well as plan, and if your plans be numerous, let your prayers be all the more fervent, lest the natural tendency of your constitution should degenerate into reliance upon the arm of flesh, and dependence upon your own wisdom, instead of absolute reliance upon God.

Gen 32:14-16. Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto His servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

In order that there might be time for his brother to look at the present in detail, and see it piece by piece, and so be the more struck with the size of it. This was true Oriental policy, and crafty Jacob always had more than enough of something and planning even when it was not done with wisdom; but, in this case, I think it was a wise arrangement, for which he is to be commended.

Gen 32:17-19. And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

What care he takes about the whole affair! We cannot blame him, under the circumstances, yet how much grander is the quiet, noble demeanour of Abraham, who trusts in God, and leaves matters more in his hands! Yet, alas! even he tried plotting and scheming more than once, but failed every time he did so.

Gen 32:17-21

But in the middle of the night, he was in such deep anxiety concerning his meeting with his brother, and probably still more concerning his position towards his God, that he felt that he must get away alone to pray.

Gen 32:19-20

That was a very anxious night for Jacob; he was to have another night of sterner work still, but in doing as he did he acted wisely and rightly.

Depend upon it, our sins will come home to us sooner or later. Jacob must have bitterly regretted, that night, that he had ever wronged Esau. There was a long interval between Jacob going away, and he coming back again, but his sin came home to him; and if you are a child of God and you do wrong, it is more certain to come home to you, in this life, than if you were one of the ungodly. As for them, they are often left to be punished in another world; but if you are a child of God, you will be chastened here for your iniquity. Remember how earnestly David prayed about the sins of his youth, and his later transgressions too; and Jacob, in deep humility, must have most vividly remembered his sin against his brother.

Gen 32:20-24. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. And he rose up that night, and took his two womenservants, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone;

This was a very anxious time for him, the heaviest trial of his life seemed impending. He was dreading it more than he need have done, for God never meant the trouble he feared to come upon him at all. He was trembling under a dark cloud that was to pass over his head without bursting. No tempest of wrath was to break out of it upon him. However, we must admire Jacob in this one respect, that, with all his thought, and care, and planning, and plotting, he did not neglect prayer. He felt that nothing he could do would be effectual without God's blessing. He had not reached the highest point of faith, though he had gone in the right direction a great deal further than many Christians. He now resolved to have a night of prayer, that he might win deliverance: "Jacob was left alone;"

Gen 32:21-24

We know who that Divine Man was, the God who afterwards actually became man, of whom it might even then be said that "His delights were with the sons of men."

It does not say that he wrestled with the man, but "there wrestled a man with him." We call him "wrestling Jacob," and so he was; but we must not forget the wrestling man,—or, rather, the wrestling Christ,—the wrestling Angel of the covenant, who had come to wrestle out of him much of his own strength and wisdom, which, though it was commendable in a measure, and we have

commended it, was an evil because it kept him from relying on the strength and wisdom of God.

Gen 32:22-24

It was the man Christ Jesus putting on the form of manhood before the time when he would actually be incarnate, and the wrestling seems to have been more on his side than on Jacob's, for it is not said that Jacob wrestled, but that "there wrestled a man with him." There was something that needed to be taken out of Jacob, — his strength and his craftiness; and this angel came to get it out of him. But, on the other hand, Jacob spied his opportunity, and, sending the angel wrestling with him, he in his turn began to wrestle with the angel.

Gen 32:22-30

We shall read three short portions of Scripture, all illustrative of the great truth that God has sometimes given grace to his people to overcome himself, the Almighty has condescended to be vanquished by man. First, let us read the story of Jacob in the Book of Genesis, the thirty-second chapter, at the twenty-second verse: —

Gen 32:22-24

He had made a quiet oratory for himself by sending everyone else of the company over to the other side of the brook; his own resolve being —

"With thee all night I mean to stay,

And wrestle till the break of day."

Ge 32:24-25

When the wrestling Man, the Angel of the covenant, saw —

Ge 32:25-26

When we come nearest to God, we must have a deep sense of our own personal weakness; it must never be supposed, if our suit prevails with heaven, that there is anything in us, or anything in our prayers, to account for our prevalence. Whatever power we have, must come from God's grace alone; and hence, usually, when we pray so as to prevail with the Lord there is at the same time a shrinking of the sinew, a consciousness of weakness, a sense of pain; yet it is just then that we are prevailing, and therefore we may rest assured that our prayer will be answered. The Angel said, "Let me go," at the very time when Jacob felt the shrinking of the sinew: "He said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he (Jacob) said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Gen 32:24. And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

I suppose our Lord Jesus Christ did here, as on many other occasions preparatory to his full incarnation, assume a human form, and came thus to wrestle with the patriarch.

Gen 32:25. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh;

So that he was made painfully to realize his own weakness while he was putting forth all his strength.

So that he fell, or began to fall; but still he gripped the Angel, and would not let him go.

Where the column of the leg supports the body, and if that be disjoined, a man has lost all his strength. It was brave of Jacob thus to wrestle, but there was too much of self about it all. It was his own sufficiency that was wrestling with the God-man, Christ Jesus. Now comes the crisis which will make a change in the whole of Jacob's future life: "He touched the hollow of his thigh."

Gen 32:25. And the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

What can Jacob do now that the main bone of his leg is put out of joint?

He cannot even stand up any longer in the great wrestling match; what can he do?

For even with a dislocated hip Jacob would not give up wrestling; he meant to hold this wondrous Man until he got a blessing from him.

Gen 32:26. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

That was grandly spoken.

Bravely said, O Jacob! And ye sons of Jacob, learn to say the same. You may have what you will if you can speak thus to the covenant angel, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

It is evident that, as soon as he felt that he must fall, he grasped the other "Man" with a kind of death-grip, and would not let him go. Now, in his weakness, he will prevail. While he was so strong, he won not the blessing; but when he became utter weakness, then did he conquer.

Gen 32:26-29

He would not gratify Jacob's curiosity concerning his name, but he gave him the blessing that he craved. This was just as our Divine Master acted when his disciples enquired of him concerning the times and seasons, he told them it was not for them to know what the Father had retained in his own power; but Christ added, what was much better for them, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." He will not tell us all we want to know, but he will give us all we need to have. What a wise and prudent Lord is ours!

Gen 32:27. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

That is, a supplanter, as poor Esau well knew.

"The supplanter."

Gen 32:27-29

Holy desires will be realized, and believing prayers will be answered, but mere curiosity will not be gratified. Those who read the Scriptures with a view simply to find out novelties that may tickle their fancy, read in vain. The covenant Angel will give thee what thou wilt if it be needful for thee; but he will not answer thine idle questions. He said to Jacob, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?"

Gen 32:28. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel:

That is, a prince of God. "A prince of God."

Gen 32:28. For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed.

Jacob was the prince with the disjointed limb, and that is exactly what a Christian is. He wins, he conquers, when his weakness becomes supreme, and he is conscious of it.

Gen 32:28-29

And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

He received what he sought for his necessity, but not what he merely asked out of curiosity.

That has often been the request of God's people, they have wanted to know God's wondrous name. The Jews superstitiously believe that we have lost the sound of the name of Jehovah, — that the name is unpronounceable now altogether. We think not so; but, certainly, no man knows the nature of God, and understands him, but he to whom the Son shall reveal him. Perhaps Jacob's request had somewhat of curiosity in it, so the angel would not grant it.

Gen 32:29. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

There are limits to all human intercourse with God. We must not go where vain curiosity would lead us, else will he have to say to us, as he did to Jacob, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?"

He did not give him what he asked for, but he gave him something better, and, in like manner, if the Lord does not open up a dark doctrine to you, but gives you a bright privilege, that will be better for you.

Gen 32:29-30

Thus did Jacob the wrestler overcome his God. Now turn to the thirty-second chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we find a description of the sin of idolatry into which the Israelites fell while Moses was absent in communion with God upon the mountain. The people brought their golden ear-rings to Aaron, and he made a calf, and they bowed before it, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." While this wickedness was going on, Moses was on the mountain-top with God.

Gen 32:30. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

How he must have trembled to think that he had the daring perhaps his fears made him call it the presumption actually to wrestle with God himself, for he was conscious now that it was no mere angel, but “the Angel of the covenant,” the Lord himself, with whom he had wrestled.

Gen 32:31. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

He was lame, and probably remained lame for life.

The memorial of his weakness was to be with him as long as he lived. People would ask, “How came the halting gait of that princely man? “And the answer would be, “It was by his weakness that he won his principedom, he became Israel, a prince of God, when his thigh was put out of joint.” How pleased would you and I be to go halting all our days with such weakness as Jacob had, if we might also have the blessing that he thus won!

Gen 32:32. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank.

Some touch of human weakness must always accompany the divine strength that God may give to us. If we are allowed the high honour of carrying the untold treasure of the gospel, we must be reminded that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Yet who would not be content to limp for life if he might but win such a victory as Jacob won on that memorable night by the brook Jabbok?

Genesis 33

Gen 33:1-2. And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

He placed them in the order of his affection for them, the best-beloved in the rear.

Gen 33:3-4. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

God had been very gracious to him, and all his fears were gone, so he met Esau as a brother, not as an enemy, and the four hundred men were willing to become his protectors.

Gen 33:5. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

There was a considerable number of them altogether, more than enough, I expect most of you would think if you had them; but Jacob did not speak of them disparagingly, but he described them as “the children which God hath graciously given thy servant.”

Gen 33:6-10. Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand:

For, among Orientals, it is such a common custom to offer and receive presents, that, if they are not accepted, it is regarded as an affront.

Gen 33:10-12. For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

Genesis 45

Gen 45:1-2. Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him: and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud:

Emotion long pent up grows violent; and when at last it does burst forth, it cannot be restrained: "He wept aloud."

Gen 45:2-3. And the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

What a rush of thoughts must have passed through their minds when they remembered all their unkind behavior toward him! There is no wonder that "they were troubled at his presence."

Gen 45:4. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you.

He pleads with them, he who was far greater than they—a prince among peasants,—now prays to them; and is it not wonderful that the Lord Jesus, our infinitely-greater Brother, at times pleads with us, even as he said to the woman at the well, "Give me to drink"? Joseph said unto his brethren, "Come near to me, I pray you."

Gen 45:4-5. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, not angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

"You did very wrong, but I say nothing about that, for I want you to notice how God has over-ruled your action, how your sin has been made to be the means of your preservation and the preservation of many besides: 'God did send me before you to preserve life.'"

Gen 45:6. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be eating nor harvest.

There were to be five more dreary years of utter desolation and want.

Gen 45:7. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

How wonderfully those two things meet in practical harmony,—the free will of man and the predestination of God! Man acts just as freely and just as guiltily as if there were no predestination whatever; and God ordains, arranges, supervises, and over-rules, just as accurately as if there were no free will in the universe. There are some purblind people who only believe one or other of these two truths; yet they are both true, and the one is as true as the other. I believe that much of the theology which is tinged with free will is true, and I know that the teaching which fully proclaims electing love and sovereign grace is also true; and you may find much of both these truths in the Scriptures. The fault lies in trying to compress all truth under either of those two heads. These men were verily guilty for selling their brother, yet God was verily wise in permitting him to be sold. The inference which Joseph draws from their misconduct is, of course, an inference of love. Love may not be always logical, but it is sweetly consoling, as it must have been in this case.

Gen 45:8. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

See how Joseph traces God's hand in his whole career.

Gen 45:9. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

See how love attracts; Joseph must have his brothers near him, now he wants to have his father also near. "Go up to my father, and say unto him, 'Come down unto me.'" "See how great love turns pleader again; he who said to his brethren, "Come near to me," sends to his father the message, "Come down unto me."

Joseph, having made himself known to his brethren, bids them return to their father, and bring him down to Egypt to see his long-lost son.

Gen 45:10. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

Our common saying, "Love me, love my dog," is very true. Love me, love even my flocks and my herds. So the blessing of God extends to all that his chosen people have; not only to their children, but to all that they possess.

Gen 45:10-11

It is just like Joseph to speak thus kindly, and to put the invitation so attractively to his father: "Thou shalt be near unto me." That

would be the greatest joy of all to old Jacob; and this is the greatest joy to a sinner when he comes to Christ, our great Joseph, "Thou shalt be near unto me." It is not merely that he gives us the land of Goshen to dwell in, but he promises that we shall be near unto him, and that is best of all.

Gen 45:11-13. And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

Love is impatient to have the object of its affection brought near. Now we will read two short portions out of the Song of Solomon, from which you will see how love evermore craves for nearness to the loved one. The Song opens thus:—

Gen 45:12-22

And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.

Benjamin was his full brother, so he loved him best, and gave him most.

Gen 45:23-24. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

This was a sure sign that Joseph knew his brethren, and they might well recognize him even by that precept, for their consciences must have told them that it had been their common habit to fall out either with or without occasion, so he bids them not to do so.

Gen 45:25-28. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said,

See how quickly the patriarch changes from Jacob into Israel; when his spirit is revived, he becomes Israel.

Gen 45:28. It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

Now we are going to read in the Gospel according to John, the fifth chapter, beginning at the twenty-fourth verse.

Genesis 49

Gen 49:1-2. And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last day. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

All this was to Reuben's advantage, yet he was spoiled through one fault.

It must have been a great comfort to the old man to have all his twelve sons with him. What a quiet answer this was to his former unbelief! They were all there, yet he could remember the time when he had said, "Ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." Ah! we also shall have in our later days to chide ourselves for our foolish unbelief. "Jacob called unto his sons," so he was not bereaved after all. They are all here, Jacob. It falls to the lot of few fathers to have twelve sons, and to fewer still to have all twelve of them gathered about his dying bed. "Gather yourselves together." They were to keep together as a family; and shall not the people of God keep together? Come away from the world, beloved, but come close to one another; be one household, be it your delight to assemble around your elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days." We are not told nowadays everything about the future, but much of the future is unfolded to us in the great principles of the law and the gospel, and we may learn very much of holy foresight by coming to the oracles of God.

Gen 49:3. Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

The patriarch fixes his eyes on his firstborn; he must say something sharp that would dishonour him, but he does not deny him the rights of birthright. He clothes him with the robes and the jewels of primogeniture, and then he strips him: —

Gen 49:4. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

So a man may have great opportunities, and yet lose them. Uncontrolled passions may make him very little who otherwise might have been great. Reuben was "the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power," yet his father had to say to him, "Thou shalt not excel."

So it is clear that the greatest strength and dignity and power will not serve a man, so as to make him excel, if he be unstable. There are many such persons still remaining in the world; their doctrine changes like the moon, and we never know what it is. Their spirit and temper constantly change; their pursuits are sometimes in one direction, and sometimes in another; they are "everything by starts, and nothing long;" and to each of them it may be said, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.":

Gen 49:4-7

It is a very remarkable circumstance, well worthy of notice, that this curse was turned into a real blessing, especially in the case of the tribe of Levi. It is true that they were divided and scattered, like handfuls of salt, throughout the whole of Israel, for they were attendants upon the Lord's priests, and they had cities appointed to them so that, while they did dwell here, and there, and everywhere, it was in order that they might reach the whole of the people, and prove a blessing to them. Are any of you labouring under a very serious disadvantage? Does it look to you like a curse? Then pray to God to make it into a blessing. I believe that, often, the worst thing that can happen to Christian men is really the best thing, for, while nature would cry out, "The clouds are to be dreaded," grace can reply, — The clouds ye so much dread Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head.

Gen 49:5. Simeon and Levi —

They stood next according to the order of birth: "Simeon and Levi" —

Gen 49:6. Are brethren;

They are very much like each other.

Gen 49:6-7. Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Hence we do not read of the tribe of Simeon in the blessing of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy; but the Levites had this curse turned into a blessing, for, though they were scattered, yet they were scattered as priests and instructors to the other tribes. Happy is that man who, though he begins with a dark shadow resting upon him, so lives as to turn even that shadow into bright sunlight. Levi gained a blessing at the hands of Moses, one of the richest blessings of any of the tribes. This holy man, Jacob, in dying, did not express himself according to the rules of natural affection but he yielded himself up to the Spirit of God; hence he had to say very much that must have been very bitter for a father to say, and he said it in all faithfulness being taught of the Spirit concerning things to come.

Gen 49:8. Judah, —

Now the patriarch changes his tone, for he has come to that tribe which would take the birthright, out of which the Christ would come: "Judah" —

His name was praise, and such was his history to be, for David came of that tribe, and great David's greater Son, whom it is our joy to praise.

Gen 49:8. Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise:

They praised God for him, they praised God by him, they praised God in him; he is the type of Jesus, of whom we can say all this with great emphasis.

Gen 49:8. Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

While that was true of Judah, it is still more true of him who sprang out of Judah, even our Lord and King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

In the person of David, in the long line of kings of the tribe of Judah, all this came true; and in the person of the great Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, all this has come true to a very high degree.

Gen 49:9. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old

lion; who shall rouse him up?

The coat of arms of Judah was a lion couchant, in the fullness of his strength, keeping still, waiting to spring upon his adversary. Our Lord Christ is such a lion today; "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" couchant, lying down: "who shall rouse him up?" Ah! if he be once fully aroused what power will he put forth when he shall spring upon his adversaries?

Our Lord overcame his enemies even in the thicket of this world; and all power is given unto him now that he has "gone up" again into his glory. Let that man beware who would attack this Lion of the tribe of Judah: "Who shall rouse him up?" If you persecute his followers, you will rouse him up. If you deny his truth, trample on the doctrine of atonement, and reject his love, you will rouse him up. But beware in that day, for terrible is the King of Judah when he is once aroused. Wherefore, submit yourselves to him: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

Gen 49:10. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

When did the dominion depart from Judah till the Lord Jesus came as the Seat One? And unto him, to this very day, the people gather, and more and more shall gather in the latter days.

Jacob's eyes were dim, but he could see a very long way; he could see to the coming of Christ, the Shiloh, the Pacificator, the Peace-maker; he could see that day when the Jews would cry, "We have no king but Caesar," for the Shiloh would have come, and the scepter would have departed from Judah's tribe. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Oh, that it might be so today! May many be gathered to Christ! He is the true center, and we gather unto him. May the divisions of the Church be soon healed by a general gathering unto Christ, who alone is the center of the Church. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

Gen 49:11-12. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

It was literally so with Judah, but it is gloriously as with our Lord to this day. It was his blood which yielded the juice of those rare clusters of the choice vine; and now, with garments dyed with his own blood, he comes from Edom, for he has trodden down his foes, and he cries, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me."

They were to have a land in which would be milk for babes and wine for strong men; surely this land is "thy land, O Emmanuel!" What nourishing milk there is in the gospel, and what exhilarating wine for those who know the love of Christ!

Gen 49:13. Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his brother shall be unto Zidon.

So did Zebulun dwell even until the day when our Lord came, for Matthew writes concerning him, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

When the land was divided by lot, the lot was disposed by God to the complete fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy. Many things may seem to be left to chance, but they are not, the hand of God still guides and controls. This blessing is very suggestive "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for a haven of ships." If God puts you by the mind that you are a haven for ships, the Lord, in his providence, fixes your position. See that you turn it to account for the good of others.

Gen 49:14-15. Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

This was a poor character for Issachar to possess; it was a tame-spirited tribe, that loved rest and ease, and therefore did not fight with the common foe. Issachar crouched down between the burdens instead of taking them up and bearing them; God grant that none of us may be of that lazy tribe! I think that I know some who are; they could do a great deal, but they see that rest is good, and the land is pleasant, so they idle away their days.

Issachar's was a poor case; he was so idle, so fond of rest, that he was willing to become a servant unto tribute. This seems hardly a blessing yet it was true of Issachar. He was strong, but then he was an ass as well as strong, so he liked couching down between two burdens much better than bearing either one of them, yet he had to bow his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

Gen 49:16-17. Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

Dan is noted among the tribes for its famous leap, capturing that distant part of the country for itself. Here good old Jacob, worn out

by what he had already said, exhausted by the ecstasy into which as a prophet he had been cast, paused awhile, and panted.

This tribe would show more cunning than courage; it would excel rather in the strategy of war than in the force of arms. Here the old man paused, and refreshed himself by saying, —

Gen 49:18. I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

But he soon resumed his prophecy: — go Ge 49:19

What a happy breathing-space is this! When you and I also are near our journey's end, may we be able to say, as Jacob did, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." He could not have said that once. This is the very Jacob who had, in his earlier days, been full of crafty policy, and tricks and schemes; but he has done with all that now, and he is able truthfully to say, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

Gen 49:19. God, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

Many of God's servants belong to this tribe, for their life is spent in conflict. They do not seek it, but it comes to them; and, for a time, they seem to be overcome, yet let them clutch at the promise given by God.

This has been the blessing of many a child of God, — to fight, and apparently to lose the battle, yet to win it at the end. O thou who art striving against sin, or seeking to win souls for Christ, after many disappointments may you be able to clutch this sweet assurance, "He shall overcome at the last."

Gen 49:20. Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Well fed, and then yielding correspondingly. There are some people who like to have their bread to be fat, but they yield to the King no dainties. Let it not be so with us; but let us both feed well and yield well.

Asher was a tribe that was placed in a very fertile region where everything was crowned with delight. Oh, to have our inheritance where we feed upon the bread of heaven, and where the deep truths of God become to us royal dainties!

Gen 49:21. Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

The type of what a Christian minister should be,— indeed, what every Christian worker should be,— "a hind let loose," one who can say with David, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds."

Naphtali was a tribe notable for those that could speak freely, helped of God with a holy freedom in bearing testimony to his truth.

He has liberty in speech, freedom of utterance, he is not in bonds, he is as "a hind let loose."

Gen 49:22. Joseph —

Ah, now the patriarch comes to his beloved Joseph, and here the old man lingers long, longer than upon any other of his sons: "Joseph" —

Gen 49:22. Is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:

The Hebrew puts it, "Joseph is a son of fruits, even a son of fruits by a well; whose daughters run over the wall."

Gen 49:22. Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; —

Where he can suck up abundant nutriment,—

Gen 49:22. Whose branches run over the wall:

He does more than he is expected to do; nothing seems to content him, his "branches run over the wall."

Gen 49:23-24. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hand were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

Joseph is a type of him who is both the Shepherd and the Stone to us, the Shepherd who defends us, provides for us, and dies for us, and the foundation on which we build for time and eternity.

You know how sorely Joseph was persecuted by his brethren, yet how the Lord was with him in all his troubles. It appears from these words that he was himself an archer, and that he was not in a hurry to shoot his arrows; his bow remained still. It is the strong who can afford to be quiet; as you go across the village green, a goose will hiss at you, while the strong ox lies down calmly, and

takes no notice of you: "His bow abode in strength," —

Gen 49:24. And the arms of his hands —

Not only his hands, but the arms of his hands —

Gen 49:25-28. Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

Gen 49:28-33

It is a very sweet thing to die with a blessing on your lips, and it is equally good to live in the same spirit. Our Lord Jesus was blessing his disciples when he was taken from them; and since we do not know when we shall be taken away from our relatives, let us be always blessing them. May the Lord, who has blessed us, make us a blessing to others!