

No.

132.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

Genesis 22.

An Address (revised) at

61, Upton Lane,
Forest Gate.

15th September, 1919.

by

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ADDRESS TO PARENTS
AND THOSE INTERESTED IN CHILDREN.

This is a wonderful passage. How often some of us have pondered it when speaking of the GRACE of God to Israel. We have seen a beautiful picture of the way of salvation, - a twofold picture, composed of parallels and contrasts. Sometimes we have viewed Isaac as a picture of the Lord Jesus, and have seen the beloved one, "Thine only son whom thou lovest"; we have seen the WILLING one, and we have seen him raised from the dead in a figure. On other occasions our mind has been turned in another direction. We have seen in Isaac the first one who was BORN a Jew. We have looked round on a Jewish crowd, and have said, "My friends, you all stand here living because of a sacrifice. You all descend from Isaac, and if the sacrifice had not died you would not be here. Your physical life depends on that ram, and our spiritual life depends on the One of Whom it was a picture". We have been able to say to them, Isaac was marked out to be slain, and therein God shows what a sinner may expect. But we have emphasized another aspect. Isaac was marked out as a BURNT offering, but he was never offered. Man is not good enough for a burnt offering. So the thought of sacrificing Isaac brings out at once and at the same time (a) the obedience of Abraham, (b) the fact that a sinner deserves to die, and (c) the fact that a sinner is not competent to be a sacrifice. Wealthy indeed is the teaching of every verse of Scripture. Precious is the fulness of every message from our God. Furthermore, we have viewed, and rightly seen, Abraham's own prophecy of

the Lord Jesus. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad", - so said the Lord Jesus. "Rejoiced to see My day". You will observe that Abraham said "My son, God WILL provide Himself a lamb", - actually the wording is more forcible, "God will provide Himself THE Lamb". Afterwards a ram was found, it was "A ram", not "THE LAMB", and when he had offered up a ram, Abraham still said it is future, for he did not say "God has provided", he called the name of the place Jehovah Jireh "The Lord will provide" (the work was still future) as it is said (not only TO this day, leave out the word "to", it is in italics) as it is said this day, In the mount of the Lord He shall be seen", as if that the writer of Genesis desired that the words of Abraham might be continually repeated "as it is said to-day", - keep on saying them, said Moses. The words will come true, In the mount of the Lord HE SHALL BE SEEN, which is I think the preferable rendering, and in the mount of the Lord, Christ WAS seen in the fulness of time, - precious Sacrifice in the place of guilty sinners.

But oh, beloved friends, such an interpretation is not my only thought this evening. We have rather an address to those who are interested in children, whether parents or not. Some have this responsibility in the service of the Lord. It is important, therefore, that we should approach this deeply practical and solemn subject with spiritual definiteness. Unless we know Christ as the Sacrifice of whom this passage speaks, we are not able to understand the real obedience which God expects from His people; but if in mercy we understand the teaching which has already been brought forward, we may realize in Gen. 22 one of the most remarkable passages as to home-life which is found in the whole compass of Scripture. First of all, when God was pleased to test Abraham, He dealt with the home. Adam failed as to the home. Abraham was on this occasion devotedly obedient as to the home.

Abraham had not always been obedient quickly before, but had been somewhat slower at first. The Lord said to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house; but he still stayed in Haran, TILL HIS FATHER DIED. "From thence when his father was dead he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell" - not till his father was dead. We read when he came out of Haran, HE TOOK LOT and "they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan THEY CAME". Not till his father was dead. He had been tested in the home before, and had obeyed somewhat slowly. Now he is tested in the home and obeys quickly; and James 2 tells us that when his faith was thus made perfect he was called the friend of God. "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you", - that is the Lord's own statement. But, beloved friends, we have another aspect to-night; and the aspect is this - God emphasizes by this passage a parent's love, and shows His approval of a parent's love. The home is to be a centre of love. It is not a mere machine. It is to have the manifestation of deep love. I go a step further, God has used many things in nature to give types of spiritual things, for I suppose we shall agree it is NOT that the spiritual things are conformed to the natural, but that God has overruled the natural to give pictures of the spiritual. In accord with this God arranged the love of husband and wife to give a picture of Christ and the church. God arranged the love of a parent to a child to give a picture, not only of the love that He has to His people in grace, but also a picture of His love to His beloved Son; for the love of Abraham to Isaac is made a type of the love of God the Father in giving up His beloved Son to actually die for sinners. If that be so, the love of a parent to a child should be very intense. That which God has marked out as a

picture must be very wonderful in His sight. And so we have a tremendous stress, from this passage, on the importance of love in the home, and the responsibility of a parent to "love", the privilege of a parent to love, the nature of a parent's love. Secondly, we have Isaac as a beautiful example of what a child SHOULD be. Isaac's character throughout this passage is very encouraging. First of all, we notice that God told ABRAHAM, but told nothing to Isaac. Abraham rose up early in the morning, took two of his young men, and Isaac his son, and they went along the journey. And Abraham told the young men to stay behind, adding "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, AND WE WILL COME AGAIN TO YOU". Here is a most delightful statement. We usually look at it in connection with faith, and say he did not only put it "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and I will come again to you", but "WE will come again to you". He had a confident faith; but that is not my subject to-night. I am not thinking of the general aspect. It seems delightful that one can feel the wide aspect of the manifold thoughts of truth and still have a number of OTHER thoughts on another line. So full is Scripture; and the suggestion I want to bring out here is that Abraham laid a great stress on his son being WITH HIM IN WORSHIP. I need hardly say that parents should be KNOWN as worshipping ones, if they are born again themselves; and none can be TRUE, and fully devoted, and faithful parents, unless they are children of God. Parents are to understand what worship means, and they should have their children with them in connection with worship. There should be a stress on worship. "I and the lad will go yonder and WORSHIP, and come again to you". Let me repeat this thought. Oh how important it is to have worship in connection with the home, and to have the children trained to regard their parents as worshippers, and for the parents to desire that their children should be with them in

worship. I need hardly say that the ORDER of words in Scripture is inspired. I am very glad that Abraham did not say "The lad and I". He put himself first. There is no pride in a parent putting himself first in dealing with the children. They must be kept in their right place. It is "I and the lad", and an emphatic "I", and the parent must be an emphatic "I" with the child. The parent is to train the child, and the parent has this privilege and responsibility. Let me repeat it, the parent MUST be an emphatic "I". The parent must be first. It is not pride, but an appointed arrangement. And the wise child welcomes it. Furthermore, Isaac is marked out not only as one who goes with his father to worship, but as one who is strictly obedient. Abraham TOOK the wood and LAID it upon Isaac, and they went both of them together. Isaac does not speak, so far as the record goes, at first. There are some children who speak more than they obey. Isaac obeys before he speaks. He harmonizes with his father's wish, even though it means carrying a burden. It is not an unimportant point, and thus we have brought before us that Abraham took the wood and laid it upon Isaac his son. It may be we already realise that there was a wisdom in that which he laid upon his son. My mind at once travels back to practical teaching, to the type and we think of Him who bore the cross, before He was placed on it. But this evening we are not so much dwelling upon that precious practical teaching which might occupy us many evenings, and we come back to see the practical discipline and wisdom of putting the wood upon his son. It was not too much weight for his son. A parent is wise. But he took the easier things to carry himself, and rightly so, - yet THEY were the more dangerous things, - the fire and the knife. Here is discretion once more. I have no doubt that Isaac was at this time a fair age. There seems every reason for believing some time had passed. On the

other hand he is called "the boy", and there is no reason for children to get beyond "boyhood", WITH RESPECT TO THEIR PARENTS too soon. Some may think they are grown up long before they are. However, I would dwell on the fact that Isaac was probably older than the age that many would characterize as "boyhood", to suggest the CONTINUANCE of ready obedience. But the age is not given, that we may see the forcefulness of other parts of the subject. The fire and the knife, the implements of danger, are retained by the father. At once our mind goes aside to the type. We see the wrath of God, the fire and the knife. Wonderfully is everything pictured, as to the Lord Jesus and the cross, and the fire and the knife were ready that when He was laid on the cross that fire and knife might meet Him, and that He as the perfect Sacrifice might provide a salvation through the receiving of which parents are able to train their children.

But to return. Now Isaac speaks, and addresses Abraham his father. His words are given. "My father". It is very delightful. Probably the majority of twentieth century children would have said, "You have forgotten something", or, otherwise, with blunt pride, intruded their imagined wisdom. But Isaac shows a quiet politeness. He does not even ask his question at first. He simply says, "My father", and then receives an INVITATION to speak further. Having received that welcome he puts his question in a most gracious way. There is nothing harmful in politeness, but there is much harm in the absence of it. And so he asks, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is THE lamb for a burnt offering?" Where? It is to HIM a mystery. He is quite aware of the fact that Abraham has plenty of flocks. There is no physical or material need for this journey without a lamb. Isaac has been pondering the problem. He speaks as one who is a little troubled regarding it. Everything seems strange to him. But instead of criticizing he asks a question in a right manner. He makes his

father the one in whom he confides. He expects the right instruction from his father. Happy the child who confides in a parent. Happy is the parent who expects and honours that confidence. Happy the child who makes a friend, in this sense of the word, of a parent. Happy the parent who arranges himself or herself in order that the children may feel such friendship is welcomed, and that they are not in the way. Abraham answers with a beautiful tenderness, and yet with a delightful vagueness, from the standpoint of Isaac's comprehension, - answers with a gracious prophetic force, but Isaac could not have understood it then. BUT observe how Abraham directs his son to the MIGHTY GOD. Abraham does not attempt to explain all to Isaac. It is a good thing when children ask questions wanting to know. It is a good thing when their parents either explain, or, having a good reason not to explain, are CHEERFULLY recognized by the children as wise in their silence or their speaking. Abraham refuses to explain, not because he is quite ignorant of the will of the Lord, but because it is not the time to say all to Isaac. There are some parents who answer "Do not worry me", and, perhaps, word their reply even more rudely, and then expect their children to be polite. But Abraham treats his child with that courtesy which causes an encouragement to the courtesy manifested in return. We often reap what we sow in our manners as well as our other actions. Yet Abraham, though speaking with courtesy, "My son", at the same time refuses to give information WHICH IS NOT THEN SUITED TO ISAAC'S NEED. But he directs his son to the MIGHTY GOD. Happy the child who is glad to hear from his father something ABOUT THE LORD. "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering". The twentieth century child would be "wiser" than to keep silent. The twentieth century child would either be sullen, or would perhaps interject with some statement as "That is no answer". But Isaac was wiser than those who think themselves

wise. "So they went both of them together". Yes they went along, and thus they came, came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built the altar, - and laid the wood in order, - and bound Isaac his son. Not a word is recorded from Isaac's lips. The beautiful obedience of the Lord Jesus shines out in type. But not only so, though this might ever be first, we have a PRACTICAL encouragement to children with respect to their parents' actions when those parents' arrangements are not understood. Abraham did not give the full reason, but Isaac had implicit confidence in his father. There are often faults on both sides when this is not the case. It is well to notice not only the obedience of Isaac, but the fact that the one whom he obeyed was obedient himself unto God. We cannot claim obedience unless we first render it. We cannot expect that which honours our position unless we honour God in HIS position. As we act toward a heavenly Father we may anticipate there will be blessing in our home, and children acting toward us, but there must be a consistency and a regularity. Irregularity is the ruin of many an individual, as well as of many a home.

And so Isaac is bound, and Abraham obeys up to the last moment. But, in God's mercy, the last moment arrives, and there comes instead of the act of obedience in literal death, the reward for the act. At least God gives a cheque in words, to be paid afterwards to the full extent. God graciously interrupts the type. It is very remarkable that when God disturbs the type He makes another fuller type, and the broken narrative makes a narrative which is more unbroken, and the Antitype Who excels all the types is gloriously suggested.

We pass, rather, to the practical aspect once again; though always all truth is practical, and the unveiling of redemption the basis of holiness. In this narrative we notice that God honours the home where He is honoured. "Them that honour Me I will honour" is a principle which CANNOT be changed.

God is pleased to bring blessing to the family where He is exalted, and both Abraham and Isaac share the blessing. Observe God's tremendous claim. He claims the WHOLE of Isaac before He gives Isaac back to Abraham. "Seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only one from Me, in blessing I will bless thee". Yea, most strikingly the words ring out, "Because thou hast done this thing". There are many who are afraid of the word "This do". But Abraham was not, and the Lord said, "Because thou hast DONE THIS". He might have changed the type if he had been wise with twentieth century wisdom, and said "It does not matter", but because he was sufficiently wise to follow the will of the Lord he dared not to break the type, and God saw to the rest. Moreover, we find a precious indication of the Lord's looking at the heart. "Because thou hast done this thing". "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac" and received his son in a figure. So wonderful in God's sight is a heart of loving obedience. "Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only one from Me". Here is the principle which God emphasizes as to the home. The selfish parent will lose a blessing. The children must belong to the Lord in the parent's definite intention. The parent who is occupied with his or her love to the child so as to withhold from God, is committing a robbery. We remember how God honoured Elkanah and Hannah, because that which they received they gave. The same test came with regard to Abraham.

IDOLATRY in the home is a very serious sin. If anything is held back from God, if earthly pleasures and arrangements prevent the impressive thought that the children are to be trained for the Lord, then the parent cannot expect to hear the voice of God through the Scripture, "In blessing I will bless thee"; "Thou hast obeyed My voice" is a testimony from God, precious beyond all else. OBEYING His voice is the only thing that PLEASES Him. We are not instructed to do what we THINK. We are not to pick out what we wish to arrange,

hoping it will please Him. "Because thou hast obeyed My voice", Here is the blessing, here is the encouragement. "Because thou hast obeyed My voice". Observe the tremendous emphasis in verse 17 upon the twofold nature of the blessing, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed ... 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". Thou AND thy seed, as in ch. 17, and thus Abraham became a blessing TO HIS HOME. God said, "I know him in order that he may command his children after him". God knew Abraham, and had fellowship with him that Abraham might have POWER in his home, And the blessing came to the child in whose life God was put first; and the blessing came through the child in whose life God was put first. There are many parents who desire their children to be Isaacs through whom there may be blessing to others, many parents who wish that their children may grow up to be servants of the Lord and devoted to Him, but they are unwilling for the test it involves, unwilling for the strain that it implies, unwilling for the obedience which is included, unwilling for all that is meant in these solemn and precious and powerful words, "Because thou hast obeyed My voice". The same thought of preparation in the home is seen as to Zacharias and Elizabeth. Are we ready for this? A home in which there is not obedience to the Lord is not fully worthy of the name. Obeying God's voice is - "not withholding anything from Him". The "son" of promise was the climax. If Abraham gave up the son he would give up all else, and therefore the parents are encouraged to put God before all the tinsel of worldly possessions and pleasures and decorations. They are encouraged to put God first before all the THINGS of earth, - "Because thou hast obeyed My voice" - that His will may be, in the application of the Holy Spirit, the controlling power and the recognized authority in the home. There is no court of appeal from this, nor any wish

for one! Only thus can there be encouragement, only thus can there be the JOY in the Hcly Spirit in the full degree, only thus can there be glory unto His Name Whcm His people acknowledge, and in view of the Coming of Whcsc beloved Scn, they seek to walk as strangers and pilgrims.

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