

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ABRAHAM'S PROMPT OBEDIENCE TO THE CALL
OF GOD.

A Sermon

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“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”—Hebrews xi. 8.

ONE is struck with the practical character of this verse. Abraham was called, and he obeyed. There is no hint of hesitation, parleying, or delay; when he was called to go out, he went out. Would to God that such conduct were usual, yea, universal; for with many of our fellow-men, and I fear with some now present, the call alone is not enough to produce obedience. “Many are called, but few are chosen.” The Lord’s complaint is “I called and ye refused.” Such calls come again and again to many, but they turn a deaf ear to them; they are hearers only, and not doers of the word: and, worse still, some are of the same generation as that which Zechariah spake of when he said, “They pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear.” Even among the most attentive hearers how many there are to whom the word comes with small practical result in actual obedience. Here we are in midsummer again, and yet Felix has not found his convenient season. It was about midwinter when he said he should find one, but the chosen day has not arrived. The mother of Sisera thought him long in coming, but what shall we say of this laggard season? We can see that the procrastinator halts, but it were hard to guess how long he will do so. Like the countryman who waited to cross the river when all the water had gone by, he waits till all difficulties are removed, and he is not one whit nearer that imaginary period than he was years ago. Meanwhile, the delayer’s case waxes worse and worse, and, if there were difficulties before, they are now far more numerous and severe. The man who waits until he

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shall find it more easy to bear the yoke of obedience, is like the woodman who found his faggot too heavy for his idle shoulder, and, placing it upon the ground, gathered more wood and added to the bundle, then tried it, but finding it still an unpleasant load, repeated the experiment of heaping on more, in the vain hope that by-and-by it might be of a shape more suitable for his shoulder. How foolish to go on adding sin to sin, increasing the hardness of the heart, increasing the distance between the soul and Christ, and all the while fondly dreaming of some enchanted hour in which it will be more easy to yield to the divine call, and part with sin. Is it always going to be so? There are a few weeks and then cometh harvest, will another harvest leave you where you are, and will you again have to say, "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"? Shall God's longsuffering mercy only afford you opportunities for multiplying transgressions? Will ye always resist his Spirit? Always put him off with promises to be redeemed to-morrow? For ever and for ever shall the tenderness and mercy of God be thus despised? Our prayer is that God of his grace may give you to imitate the example of Abraham, who, when he was called, obeyed at once.

The sad point about the refusals to obey the call of the gospel is that men are losing a golden opportunity, an opportunity for being numbered amongst the choice spirits of the world, amongst those who shall be blessed among men and women. Abraham had an opportunity, and he had grace to grasp it, and at this day there is not on the bead-roll of our race a nobler name than that of "the father of the faithful." He obtained a supreme grandeur of rank among the truly great and good: far higher is he in the esteem of the right-minded than the conqueror blood-red from battle, or the emperor robed in purple. He was an imperial man, head and shoulders above his fellows. His heart was in heaven, the light of God bathed his forehead, and his soul was filled with divine influences, so that he saw the day of the Lord Jesus and was glad. He was blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth, and was made a blessing to all nations. Some of you will never gain such honour, you will live and die ignoble, because you trifle with supreme calls; and yet, did you believe in God, did you but live by faith, there would be before you also a course of immortal honour, which would lead you to eternal glory. Instead thereof, however, choosing the way of unbelief, and neglect, and delay, you will, I fear, one day awake to shame and to everlasting contempt, and know, to your eternal confusion, how bright a crown you have lost. I am in hopes that there are some among you who would not be losers of the crown of life; who desire, in fact, above all things, to obtain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and to them I shall speak, and while I speak may the Holy Spirit cause every word to fall with power.

To help them, we shall consider, first, *what was Abraham's special experience which led to his being what he became?* and, secondly, *what was there peculiar in Abraham's conduct?* and then, thirdly, *what was the result of that conduct?*

I. WHAT WAS ABRAHAM'S SPECIAL EXPERIENCE, which led to his becoming so remarkable a saint? The secret lies in three things: he had a call, he obeyed it, and he obeyed it because he had faith.

First, then, *he had a call*. How that call came we are not told; whether it reached him through a dream, or by an audible voice from heaven, or by some unmentioned prophet, we cannot tell. Most probably he heard a voice from heaven speaking audibly to him and saying, "Get thee out from thy kindred and from thy father's house." We, too, have had many calls, but perhaps we have said, "If I heard a voice speaking from the sky I would obey it," but the form in which your call has come has been better than that, for Peter in his second epistle tells us that he himself heard a voice out of the excellent glory when he was with our Lord in the holy mount, but he adds, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy"; as if the testimony which is written, the light that shineth in a dark place, which beams forth from the word of God, was more sure than even the voice which he heard from heaven. I will show you that it is so; for, if I should hear a voice, how am I to know that it is divine? Might it not, even if it were divine, be suggested to me for many reasons that I was mistaken, that it was most unlikely that God should speak to a man at all, and more unlikely still that he should speak to me? Might not a hundred difficulties and doubts be suggested to lead me to question whether God had spoken to me at all? But the most of you believe the Bible to be inspired by the Spirit of God, and to be the voice of God. Now, in this book you have the call—"Come ye out from among them, be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." Do not say that you would accept that call if it were spoken with a voice rather than written; you know that it is not so in daily life. If a man receives a written letter from his father or a friend, does he attach less importance to it than he would have done to a spoken communication? By no means. I reckon that many of you in business are quite content to get written orders for goods, and when you get them you do not require a purchaser to ask you in person, you would just as soon that he should not; in fact, you commonly say that you like to have it in black and white. Is it not so? Well, then, you have your wish, here is the call in black and white; and I do but speak according to common sense when I say that if the Lord's call to you be written in the Bible, and it certainly is, you do not speak truth when you say, "I would listen to it if it were spoken, but I cannot listen to it because it is written." The call as given by the book of inspiration ought to have over your minds a masterly power, and if your hearts were right before God the word spoken in the Scriptures by the Holy Ghost would be at once obeyed.

Moreover, my undecided hearers, you have had other calls beside those from the Book. There have been calls through the living ministry, when the minister has spoken as pointedly to you as if he were a prophet, and you have known that the Lord spake by him, for he has depicted your circumstances, described your condition, and the word has come to you, and you have with astonishment owned that it found you out. The message has also been spoken to you by a mother's tender love and by a father's earnest advice. You have had the call too in the form of sickness and sore trouble. In the silence of the night, when you could not sleep, your conscience has demanded to be

heard, the inward strivings of the Holy Ghost have been with you, and loud have been the knocks at your door. Who among us has not known the like? But, alas, the Lord has called and has been refused, he has stretched out his hands and has not been regarded. Is it not so with many of you? You have not been like Samuel who said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me," but like the adder which shutteth her ear to the voice of the charmer. This is not to be done without incurring great guilt and involving the offender in heavy punishment.

Abraham had a call, so have we, but here was the difference, *Abraham obeyed*. Well doth Paul say, "They have not all obeyed the gospel": for to many the call comes as a common call, and the common call falls on a sealed ear, but to Abraham and to those who by grace have become the children of faithful Abraham, to whom are the blessings of grace, and with whom God has entered into league and covenant, to these it comes as a special call, a call attended with a sacred power which subdues their wills and secures their obedience. Abraham was prepared for instant obedience to any command from God; his journey was appointed, and he went; he was bidden to leave his country, and he left it; to leave his friends, and he left them all. Gathering together such substance as he had he exiled himself that he might be a sojourner with his God, and took a journey in an age when travelling was infinitely more laborious than now. He knew not the road that he had to take, nor the place to which his journey would conduct him: it was enough for him that the Lord had given him the summons. Like a good soldier, he obeyed his marching orders, asking no questions. Towards God a blind obedience is the truest wisdom, and Abraham felt so, and therefore followed the path that God marked out for him from day to day, feeling that sufficient for the day would be the guidance thereof. Thus Abraham obeyed! Alas, there are some here present, some too to whom we have preached now for years, who have not obeyed. Oh sirs, some of you do not require more knowledge, you need far more to put in practice what you know. Would you wonder if I should grow weary of telling some of you the way of salvation any longer? Do you not yourselves weary of persuading those who will not yield? So far as I have reason to fear that my task is hopeless it becomes a heavy one. Again, and again, and again have I explained the demands of the gospel, and described the blessings of it, and yet I see its demands neglected and its blessings refused. Ah sirs, there will be an end to this ere long, one way or the other, which shall it be? O that you were wise and would yield obedience to the truth! The gospel has about it a divine authority, and is not to be trifled with. Notwithstanding that grace is its main characteristic it has all the authority of a command. Do we not read of those who "stumbled at the word, being disobedient"; surely there must be a command and a duty, or else there could not be disobedience. It is awful work when through disobedience to the command of the gospel it becomes a savour of death unto death instead of life unto life, and instead of a corner-stone it becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. Remember, upon whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder. Christ himself has said it, and so it must be.

May he of his infinite mercy give us the willing and the obedient mind that we may not pervert the gospel to our own destruction.

But I reminded you that the main point concerning Abraham was this, *he obeyed the call because he believed God*. Faith was the secret reason of his conduct. We read of certain persons that "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," and again we read that "some when they had heard did provoke." But in Abraham's case there was neither unbelief nor provocation, he believed God with a childlike faith. His faith, I suppose, lay in the following items:—When the Lord spoke he believed that it was the living God who addressed him. Believing that God spoke, he judged him worthy of his earnest heed; and he felt that it was imperative upon him to do as he was bidden. This settled, he desired nothing more to influence his course: he felt that the will of God must be right, and that his highest wisdom was to yield to it. Though he did not know where he was to go, he was certain that his God knew, and though he could hardly comprehend the reward promised to him, he was sure that the bounteous God never mocked his servants with deceitful gifts. He did not know the land of Canaan, but he was sure if it was a country chosen by God as a peculiar gift to his called servant, it must be no ordinary land. He left all such matters with his heavenly Friend, being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. What a mighty sway faith has over a man, and how greatly it strengthens him. Faith was to the patriarch his authority for starting upon his strange journey, an authority which enabled him to defy alike the worldly wisdom which advises, and the worldly folly which scoffs. Perhaps they said to him, "Why wilt thou leave thy kinsfolk, Abraham?" but he replied, "God bids me." That was for him a sufficient warrant; he wanted no further argument. This also became to him the guide of his steps. If any said, "But, strange old man, how canst thou journey when thou knowest not the way?" He replied, "I go whither the Lord bids me. Faith found in God, chart, compass, and pole star, all in one. The word of the Lord also became the nourishment for his journey. If any said, "How wilt thou be supplied, Abraham, in those wild lands, where wilt thou find thy daily bread?" he replied, "God bids me go: it is not possible that he should desert me. He can spread a table in the wilderness, or make me live upon the word which cometh out of his mouth, if bread should fail." Probably these suggestions of trial may never have occurred to Abraham, but if they did, his faith swept them aside from his path as so many cobwebs. Perhaps some even dared to say, "But whither goest thou? There is no such country, it is an enthusiast's dream,—a land which floweth with milk and honey, where wilt thou find it? O, greybeard, thou art in thy dotage, seventy years and five have bewildered thee." But he replied, "I shall find it, for the Lord has given it to me and leads me to it." He believed God, and took firm hold, and therefore he endured as seeing him that is invisible.

See, then, dear friends, what we must have if we are to be numbered with the seed of Abraham,—we must have faith in God and a consequent obedience to his commands. Have we obtained these gifts of the Spirit? I hope that many of us have the living faith which works

by love, and if so we shall rejoice in the will of the Lord, let it be what it may; if we know anything to be right we shall delight to do it, but as for doubtful or sinful deeds we renounce them. For us henceforth our leader is the Lord alone. But is it so with all of you? Let the personal question go round and cause great searching of heart, for I fear that in many instances precious faith is absent. Many have heard, but they have not believed; the sound of the gospel has entered into their ears, but its inner sense and sacred power have not been felt in their hearts. Remember that "without faith it is impossible to please God," so that you are displeasing to the Lord. How long shall it be so? How long shall unbelief lodge within you and grieve the Holy Spirit? May the Lord convince you, yea, at this moment, may he lead you to decision, and enable you henceforth to live by faith. It may be now or never with you. God grant it may be *now!*

II. This brings me to the second part of our subject, WHAT WAS THERE PECULIAR IN ABRAHAM'S CONDUCT? for whatever there was essential in his conduct there must be the same in us, if we are to be true children of the father of the faithful. The points of peculiarity in Abraham's case seem to me to have been five.

The first was this, that *he was willing to be separated from his kindred*. It is a hard task to a man of loving soul to put long leagues of distance between himself and those he loves, and to become a banished man. Yet in order to salvation, brethren, we must be separated from this untoward generation. Not that we have to take our journey into a far country, or to forsake our kindred—perhaps it would be an easier task to walk with God if we could do so—but our calling is to be separate from sinners, and yet to live among them: to be a stranger and a pilgrim in their cities and homes. We must be separate in character from those with whom we may be called to grind at the same mill, or sleep in the same bed; and this I warrant you is by no means an easier task than that which fell to the patriarch's lot. If believers could form a secluded settlement where no tempters could intrude, they would perhaps find the separated life far more easy, though I am not very sure about it, for all experiments in that direction have broken down. There is, however, for us no "garden walled around," no "island of saints," no Utopia; we sojourn among those whose ungodly lives cause us frequent grief, and the Lord Jesus meant it to be so, for he said, "Behold I send you forth as sheep among wolves." Come, now, my hearer, are you willing to be one of the separated? I mean this—Dare you begin to think for yourself? You have let your grandmother's religion come to you with the old arm chair and the antique china, as heirlooms of the family, and you go to a certain place of worship because your family have always attended there. You have a sort of hereditary religion in the same way as you have a display of family plate; pretty battered it is, no doubt, and rather light in weight by this time, but still you cling to it. Now, young man, dare you think for yourself? Or do you put out your thinking to be done for you, like your washing? I believe it to be one of the essentials of a Christian man, that he should have the courage to use his own mental faculties, and search the Bible for himself, for God has not committed our religious life to the guidance of the brain in our neighbour's head,

but he has bestowed on each of us a conscience, and an understanding which he expects us to use. Do your own thinking, my friend, on such a business as this. Now, if the grace of God helps you rightly to think for yourself, you will judge very differently from your ungodly friends; your views and theirs will differ, your motives will differ, the objects of your pursuit will differ. There are some things which are quite customary with them which you will not endure. You will soon become a speckled bird among them. The Jews in all time have been very different from all other nations, and although other races have become permanently united, the Jewish people have always been a family by themselves. Though now residing in the midst of all nations, it is still true "the people shall dwell alone, they shall not be reckoned among the nations." In all the cities of Europe there are remains of the "Jews' quarter," and we in London had our "Old Jewry," the Jews being evermore a peculiar people. We Christians are to be equally distinct, not in meats, and drinks, and garments, and holy days, but as to spirituality of mind and holiness of life. We are to be strangers and foreigners in the land wherein we sojourn. For we are not resident traders in this Vanity Fair, we pass through it because it lies in our way home, but we are ill at ease in it. In no tent of all the fair can we rest. O traders in this hubbub of trifles, we have small esteem for your great bargains and tempting cheats; we are not buyers in the Roman row nor in the French row, we would give all that we have to leave your polluted streets, and be no more annoyed by Beelzebub, the lord of the fair. Our journey is towards the celestial city, and when the sons of earth cry to us, "What do ye buy?" we answer, "We buy the truth." O young man, can you take up in the warehouse the position of being a Christian though there is no other believer in the house? Come, good woman, dare you serve the Lord, though husband and children ridicule you? Man of business, dare you do the right thing in business, and play the Christian, though around you the various methods of trading render it hard for you to be unflinchingly honest? This singularity is demanded of every believer in Jesus. You cannot be blessed with Abraham unless like him you come out, and stand forth as true men.

**"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone;
Dare to have a purpose true,
Dare to make it known."**

May God grant to us grace to be Daniels, even if the lions' den should threaten us.

A second peculiarity of Abraham's conduct is seen in the fact that *he was ready for all the losses and risks that might be involved in obedience to the call of God.* He was to leave his native country, as we have already said: to some of us that would be a hard task, and I doubt not it was such to him. The smoke out of my own chimney is better than the fire on another man's hearth. There is no place like home, wherever we may wander. The home feeling was probably as strong in Abraham as in us, but he was never to have a home on earth any more, except that he was to realise what Moses afterwards

sung, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." For him there was no rooftree and paternal estate, he owned no portion of the land in which he sojourned, and his sole abode was a frail tent, which he removed from day to day as his flocks required fresh pasturage. He could say to his God, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with thee." He had to leave those whom he loved, for, though they accompanied him part of the way, they would not go further; if he followed the Lord fully he must go alone. The patriarch knew nothing of half measures, he went through with his obedience, and left all his kindred to go to Canaan, to which he had been summoned. Those who wished to stop at Haram might stop there. Canaan was his destination, and he could not stop short of it. No doubt he had many risks to encounter on his journey and when he entered the country. The Canaanite was still in the land, and the Canaanites were a fierce and cruel set of heathen, who would have utterly destroyed the wanderer if the Lord had not put a spell upon them, and said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." It was a country swarming with little tribes, who were at war continually. Abraham himself was, for Lot's sake, to gird on his sword, and go forth to fight, peace-lover as he was. Of all discomforts and dangers, loss of property, and parting with friends, Abraham made small account. God commanded, and Abraham went. Now, brethren, can you and I do the same? Oh, you who desire to be saved, I say, can you do this? Have you counted the cost and determined to pay it? You must not expect that you will wear silver slippers and walk on green rolled turf all the way to heaven: the road was rough which your Lord traversed, and if you walk with him yours will be rough too. Can ye bear for Jesus' sake all earthly loss? Can ye bear the scoff, the cold shoulder, the cutting jest, the innuendo, the sarcasm, the sneer? Could you go further, and bear loss of property and suffering in purse? Do not say that it may not occur, for many believers lose all by having to leave the ill pursuits by which they once earned their bread. You must in your intention give all up *for* Jesus, and in act you must give up all *to* Jesus. If he be yours, you must henceforth have all things in common with him; you must be joint heirs together, his yours and yours his; you may be well content to make joint stock, when you have so little and he has so much. Oh, can you stand to it, and give up all for him? Well, if you cannot, do not pretend to do it. Yet, except ye take up your cross, ye cannot be his disciples. Except you can give up everything for him, do not pretend to follow him. Listen to this. If you think heaven worth nothing, and Christ worth nothing, if you consider worldly gain to be everything, and comfort everything, and honour everything, if you could not die a martyr's death for Christ, your love to him is not worth much, and the Abraham spirit is not in you. May God enable us to take our places in the battle in the front of the foe, where the fight is most furious. May grace make us sing,—

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee,
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
'Thou, from hence, my all shalt be."

If that be said in truth, it is well, my brother; you bid fair to be in

all things a partaker with faithful Abraham : you also shall find much blessing in the separated life.

Thirdly, one great peculiarity in Abraham was that *he waived the present for the future*. He went out to go into a place which he should *after* receive for an inheritance. He left the inheritance he then had to receive one which was yet to come. This is not the way of the world. The proverb saith, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and especially in such a bush as Abraham saw before him. It did not seem very likely he would ever obtain that land ; but still he let his bird in the hand go, and took to the bird in the bush, being fully persuaded that he should have it in God's good time. Mr. Bunyan sets this forth in his picture of two children, Passion and Patience. Passion would have all his good things now, and he sat among his toys and joys, and laughed and rejoiced. Patience had to bear to see his brother Passion full of mirth, and to hear his scoffing ; but then, as Master Bunyan beautifully says, Patience came in last for his portion, and it lasted for ever, for there is nothing after the last. So, then, if we are to have our heaven last it will last, and no cloud shall mar it, no calamity bring it to an end. He is the wise man who lets go the shadow to grasp the substance, even though he should have to wait twenty, thirty, or forty years for it. He is blessed who leaves earth's wind and bubble and feeds on more substantial meat. God grant us grace to live more for the future than we have been accustomed to do. Oh ye ungodly ones, you do not care about the future, for you have never realised death and judgment. You are afraid to look over the edge of this narrow life. As to death, nothing frightens you so much. As for hell, if you are warned to escape from it, instead of thanking the preacher for being honest enough to warn you of it, you straightway call him a "hell-fire" preacher, or give him some other ugly name. Alas, you little know how pained he is to speak to you on so terrible a subject ! You little dream how true a lover of your soul he is, or he would not warn you of the wrath to come. Do you want to have flatterers about you ? Such are to be had in plenty if you desire them. As for heaven, you seem to have no regard for it ; at any rate you are not making your title to it sure or clear by caring about divine things. If you would have the birthright you must let the present mess of pottage go. The eternal future must come far before the fleeting trifles of to-day ; you must let the things which are seen sink, and bid the "things not seen as yet" rise in all their matchless grandeur and reality before your eyes. You must give up chasing butterflies and shadows, and pursue things eternal. My soul immortal pines only for immortal joys. I leave my present lot to be appointed of the Lord as he wills, so long as he will shed his love abroad in my heart. We must be prepared for eternity, and for that purpose we should concentrate our faculties upon divine truth and personal religion, that we may be ready to meet our God. This, then, was the third excellence in Abraham's walk, that he waived present comfort for the sake of the future blessing.

Fourthly, and this is the main point, *Abraham committed himself to God by faith*.

From that day forward Abraham had nothing but his God for a

portion, nothing but his God for a protector. No squadron of soldiers accompanied the good man's march, his safeguard lay in him who had said, "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." He had to trust the Lord for his daily bread and daily guidance, for he was to march on and not know half a mile before him. He was ignorant when to stop and when to journey on, except as the Lord God guided him hour by hour. I must not say that Abraham became a poor pensioner upon the daily provision of God, but I will use a better term and describe him as "a gentleman commoner upon the royal bounty of his heavenly King." His lot was to have nothing, but to be heir of heaven and earth. Can you thus walk by faith? Has the grace of God brought you who have been hesitating to resolve henceforth to believe God and trust him? If you do you are saved, for faith is the deciding matter. To realise the existence of God and to trust in him, especially to trust in his mercy, through Jesus Christ, is the essential matter. As for the life and walk of faith, they are the most singular things in the world. I seem myself to have been climbing a series of mysterious staircases, light as air and yet as solid as granite. I cannot see a single step before me, and often there seems to the eye to be nothing whatsoever to form a foothold for the next step. I look down and wonder how I came where I am, but still I climb on, and he who has brought me so far supplies me with confidence for that which lies before me. High into things invisible the ethereal ladder has borne me, and onward and forward to glory its rounds will yet conduct me. What I have seen has often failed me, but what I have not seen, and yet have believed, has always held me stably. Have not you found it so, all ye children of God? Let us pray that the Lord may lead others to tread the same mystic ascent by beginning to-day the life of faith.

The last speciality in Abraham's procedure was, *what he did was done at once*. There were no "ifs" and "ans" debates, considerations, and delays. He needed no forcing and driving—

"God drew him and he followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

At once, I say, he went. Promptness is one of the brightest excellencies in faith's actings. Delay spoils all. Some one asked Alexander to what he owed his conquests, and he said, "I have conquered because I never delayed." While the enemy were preparing he had begun the battle, and they were routed before they knew where they were. After that fashion faith overcomes temptation. She runs in the way of obedience, or rather she mounts on the wings of eagles, and so speeds on her way. With regard to the things of God our first thoughts are best: considerations of difficulty entangle us. Whenever you feel a prompting to do a good thing do not ask anybody whether you should do it or not; no one ever repents of doing good. Ask your friends afterwards rather than beforehand, for it is ill consulting with flesh and blood when duty is plain. If the Lord has given you substance, and you are prompted to be generous to the cause of God, do not count every sixpence over, and calculate what others would give; count it after you have given it, if it must be counted at all, but it

would be better still not to let your left hand know what your right hand doeth. It cannot be wrong to do the right thing at once; nay, in matters of duty, every moment of delay is a sin. Thus we have Abraham before us; may the Holy Spirit make us like him.

Now, this morning, who will listen to the call of God? Who, like Abraham, will quit the world, with all its folly, and resolve henceforth to be upon the Lord's side? O, Spirit of the living God, constrain many a hidden Abraham to come forth!

III. We have to close with two or three words about what was THE RESULT OF ABRAHAM'S ACTION. The question of many will be, *did it pay?* That is the inquiry of most people, and within proper bounds it is not a wrong question. Did it answer Abraham's purpose? Our reply is, it did so gloriously. True, it brought him into a world of trouble, and no wonder: such a noble course as his was not likely to be an easy one. What grand life ever was easy? Who wants to be a child and do easy things? Yet we read in Abraham's life, after a whole host of troubles, "And Abraham was old and well stricken in years, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." That is a splendid conclusion—God had blessed Abraham in all things. Whatever happened, he had always been under the divine smile, and all things had worked for his good. He was parted from his friends, but then he had the sweet society of his God, and was treated as the friend of the Most High, and allowed to intercede for others, and clothed with great power on their behalf. I almost envy Abraham. I should do so altogether if I did not know that all the saints are permitted to enjoy the same privileges. What a glorious degree Abraham took when he was called "the friend of God"; was not his loss of earthly friendships abundantly made up to him? What honour, also, the patriarch had among his contemporaries; he was a great man, and held in high esteem. How splendidly he bore himself; no king ever behaved more royally. That pettifogging king of Sodom wanted to make a bargain with him, but the grand old man replied, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abraham rich." Those sons of Heth also were willing to make him a present of a piece of land around the cave of Machpelah; but he did not want a present from Canaanites, and so he said, "No, I will pay you every penny. I will weigh out the price to you, whatever you may demand." In noble independence no man could excel the father of the faithful; his contemporaries look small before him, and no man seems to be his equal, save Melchizedek. His image passes across the page of history rather like that of a spirit from the supernal realms than that of a mere man; he is so thorough, so child-like, and therefore so heroic. He lived in God, and on God, and with God. Such a sublime life recompensed a thousandfold all the sacrifice he was led to make.

Was not his life a happy one? One might wisely say, "Let my life be like that of Abraham." As to temporal things the Lord enriched him, and in spirituals he was richer still. He was wealthier in heart than in substance, though great even in that respect. And now Abraham is the father of the faithful, patriarch of the whole family of believers, and to him alone of all mortal men God said, "In thee shall

all the families of the earth be blessed." This very day, through his matchless seed, to whom be glory for ever and ever, even Jesus Christ of the seed of Abraham, all tribes of men are blessed. His life was, both for time and for eternity, a great success; both for temporals and for spirituals the path of faith was the best that he could have followed.

And now may we all be led to imitate his example. If we never have done so, may we this morning be led to give God his due by trusting him, to give the blood of Christ its due by relying upon it, to give the Spirit of God his due by yielding ourselves to him. Will you do so, or not? I pause for your reply. The call is given again, will you obey it or not? Nobody here will actually declare that he will not, but many will reply that *they hope they shall*. Alas! my sermon is a failure to those who so speak: if that be your answer, I am foiled again. When Napoleon was attacking the Egyptians he had powerful artillery, but he could not reach the enemy, for they were ensconced in a mud fort, and it made Napoleon very angry, because, if they had been behind granite walls, he could have battered them down, but their earthworks could not be blown to pieces, every ball stuck in the mud, and made the wall stronger. Your hopes and delays are just such a mud wall. I had a good deal sooner people would say, "There, now, we do not believe in God nor in his Christ," and speak out straightforwardly, than go on for ever behind this mud wall of "We will by-and-by," and "We hope it will be so one day." The fact is, you do not mean to obey the Lord at all. You are deceiving yourselves if you think so. If God be God to-morrow he is God to-day; if Christ be worth having next week he is worth having to-day. If there is anything in religion at all, it demands a present surrender to its claims and a present obedience to its laws; but if you judge it to be a lie, say so, and we shall know where you are. If Baal be God, serve him; but if God be God, I charge you by Jesus Christ, fly to him as he is revealed, and come forth from the sin of the world and be separate, and walk by faith in God. To this end may the Spirit of God enable you. Amen and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Hebrews xi. 1 to 13; Genesis xi. 27 to end; xii. 1 to 9.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—174, 655, 658.