

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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SEEING CHRIST'S DAY.

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## A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 10TH, 1899,

DELIVERED BY

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"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."—John viii. 56.

THESE Jews had claimed to be of the seed of Abraham, and the Lord Jesus Christ admitted their claim as far as it was a valid one. It is always best, in argument, to concede as much as you can fairly grant to your opponent. Sometimes, we take a few steps backward, in order to get a firmer footing, that we may leap forward with greater sureness. In the case of these Jews, since they said Abraham was their father, the Lord Jesus admitted that they were his seed according to the flesh, and therefore he said, "Your father Abraham."

Very much might be spoken in honour and commendation of Abraham. He was a princely man, well worthy to be called "the father of the faithful;" for, though all believers have a certain beauty about them because of their faith, yet Abraham stands head and shoulders above the rest of them; at least, above those who lived before the incarnation of Christ. Much, therefore, might be said in his favour, but there is no word of commendation which could possibly exceed this utterance of Jesus our Lord to the cavilling Jews in Jerusalem, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Let this stand as the very crown jewel among all the gems that make up Abraham's crown, that he saw the day of Christ through the mist of two thousand years or thereabouts, and so saw it that his heart was gladdened at the sight. There may be many good things that might be truly said of you, dear friends; but the best thing that ever can be said of you is, "They saw Christ's day, and were glad." Whatever else you do not see, if you see this, all is well with you. Blessed indeed are your eyes if you can, by faith, behold the Lamb for sinners slain, and so behold him as to be saved by his death. I do not think that anything better than this could be said of Abraham, and nothing better will be said of any of you than this testimony from the lips of Christ himself, "He saw my day, and was glad."

Yet we must learn, from our text, a sad lesson before we go fully into its teaching concerning Abraham. It reminds us that, however good a man may be personally, he cannot possibly ensure that his descendants will be like him. It was to the carping, unbelieving Jews that our Lord said, "Your father Abraham." What a contrast there was between the princely father and those who boasted that they were his children! There they stood, howling like so many wolves around the Lamb of God, all eager to devour him. Their fingers were itching to pick up stones with which they might put to death the Lord of life and glory; yet they were the descendants of Abraham! The children of "the friend of God" were seeking to slay God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son! And, a little later, those who were descended lineally from the loins of the great patriarch gathered in the street about Pilate's palace, and cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"—that "him" being the Son of the Highest, who was one with the ever-blessed Father and Spirit, and who had come to earth upon an errand of mercy and love. Yet the men who were the first and loudest to clamour for his death were those who said, "Abraham is our father."

It is almost enough to make some good men come out of their graves to see what their children or their grandchildren are doing. It is a sad thing that grace seems to quit some families. It never does run in the blood; that cannot be, for all God's children are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" and of God alone. Yet is it a very blessed fact that, often, if grace does not run in the blood, it runs side by side with it, and godly fathers joyfully live to see their children treading in their footsteps. In some families, they have this highest of all honours, that they are a household of saints. Generation after generation, this is the testimony concerning them, that they are a company of people whom God hath blessed. But, alas! it is not always so; and as it was not so with Abraham's seed in Christ's day, as the Jews had, to a very large extent, apostatized so far that they even sought to slay the Christ of God, you and I must not be staggered when we see the same thing occurring in other families, the heads of which were renowned for grace. With holy diligence, we should seek to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord, so that, if they do wander, it may not be through our fault, for if we have to blame our guilty neglect, or our evil example, for their going astray, it will be indeed sad for us; but if we are satisfied, in the sight of God, that we have done all that we could to bring them to Jesus, then, if they should dishonour our name, yet at least there will not be this worm-wood mingled with the gall, that we helped them to tread the downward road. O brothers and sisters, with all your hearts cry mightily unto God that your household, to as many generations as yet shall come, shall never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel, and to be a faithful witness for him, and for his truth, in the midst of the wicked and perverse people by whom they may be surrounded!

This truth is manifest on the very surface of our text, Abraham was a great saint, a mighty saint, a clear-eyed saint, whose gaze pierced through those twenty centuries, and beheld his Lord; yet,

after the flesh, he was the father of a blear-eyed generation, that could not see the light eternal, even when it flashed directly upon their eyeballs. I think there is nothing that is more full of warning than this to those of you who are descended from godly parents. I charge you, before the living God, put no confidence in your descent. "Ye must be born again;" even if ye are the best of all who have ever been born of woman, "ye must be born again." Wisely did Job speak when he said, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." No mother can bring into this world a perfect being, for the whole human race is fallen, we are the degenerate children of a father who himself was unfaithful to the allegiance which he owed to his God. The stain from that first sin of Adam is upon us all, so let us not say, "We be Abraham's seed;" let us not talk about being descended from a line of saints; but, rather, let us take to ourselves what Christ said to the Jews on another occasion, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." However gracious our genealogy may be, unless our family tree begins in Christ, and we ourselves are personally grafted into him, we shall die in our sins, and perish for ever. God help us, who have been so highly privileged as to be born of godly parents, to lay that truth to heart, and to seek the Lord now, that we also may be numbered among those who are saved!

With these observations by way of preface, let us now come distinctly to the text; and we shall notice, first, *in what respects Abraham saw Christ's day*; secondly, *the effect it had upon him*; that will lead us, in the third place, to think of *the respects in which we also may see Christ's day*; and to notice, in closing, *the effect which such a sight will have upon us*. If we see his day, we also shall rejoice, and be glad.

I. First, then, let us enquire, **IN WHAT RESPECTS DID ABRAHAM SEE CHRIST'S DAY?**

I understand the term "Christ's day" to mean, first, his day of humiliation here upon earth. Christ had a certain "day" when he lived here in this world; what if I were to call his whole natural life on earth one long Lord's-day? Had the Jews known the things which would have made for their peace, our Lord's sojourn here would have been to that nation one long Sabbath; had they understood the rest which Christ brings to believing, obedient souls, it would have been the true Jubilee to them. But there is another "day" yet to come, which, in the highest sense, our Lord will call, "My day." Know ye not that he is to come a second time, without a sin-offering unto salvation? This was foretold by the angels who said to his disciples, after his ascension, "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Arrayed in the vesture of his humanity,—for he still wears it at the right hand of the Father,—he will come again, but not as he came the first time.

"The Lord shall come! a dreadful form,  
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm;  
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,  
Appointed Judge of all mankind."

He shall come, to reign on earth among his ancients gloriously. He shall come, to gather to himself his own, those that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. He shall come, to set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on the left; and to make a severance between them that fear the Lord and them that fear him not. This will be his second day, the great day of his appearing, the day for which all other days were made, after which there shall be no day that can be ended with a night, but the Ancient of days shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords. This also is his day; and, without drawing fine distinctions, I have no doubt that Abraham saw Christ's day in this double sense, and that he knew him both as the Lamb slain, and as the King who is to reign for ever and ever.

How did he see Christ's day? I answer, first, *by a far-seeing, clear-sighted faith*. I do not know what revelation, which is not recorded, God may have made to Abraham; whether he did, in the night visions, as Daniel did, behold the King sitting upon his throne; but, whatever he did know, he turned to practical use by believing it. He believed that the Lord would come in the fulness of time; he believed that there would be a seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head, according to the promise at the gates of Paradise; he believed, most assuredly, that a man would come who would give rest unto his flock, that man being his own seed, in connection with whom God had expressly said that he would bless Abraham, and make him a blessing. "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." So Abraham's faith often realized what it saw. We have no record of the subject of his morning meditations when he rose early, that he might spend some time alone with the Lord ere the world with smoke became dim, or the business or ordinary occupation of the day had commenced. At such seasons I have no doubt that Abraham was in his chosen place of prayer, waiting and watching, and looking into the far-distant future, and seeing with gladdened heart that day of the Lord which now has come, and that other day of the Lord which is yet to arrive. He believed it, and therefore he saw it. Brethren and sisters, there is no seeing unless there is believing. I have heard that seeing is believing, but it is not; it is the very opposite. Seeing and believing do not run that way,—to see first, and then to believe; but they run the other way,—believe, and then see; and that is just what Abraham did. He believed God, and then he saw Christ's day afar off, and was glad. See as much as you like after you have believed; but remember our Lord's words to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;"—that is, those who did not want to see first, but believed first, and then their eyes were so opened that they saw the salvation of God.

When once you get faith, there are many windows through which that faith can look; and no doubt Abraham saw Christ's day *through the windows of special promises*. There were not so many made to him as we have now with our larger revelation in the entire Bible; but, still, there were sufficient promises to be used by his faith, and

especially that one which I quoted to you just now, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That promise alone was enough to make him know that God would, in due time, give him a seed through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. If you want to see Christ, dear friends, borrow the telescope of promise. Faith is very fond of that optic glass, and it is wonderful what she can see when she puts it to her eye. Ten thousand blessings, not seen by our natural vision, become visible to the eye of faith when we look at them through the medium of the promises of God.

Next, Abraham saw Christ, with the eye of faith, *in the types that came before him*. There were at least two very remarkable ones, or I might call them three. The first was Melchizedek. I cannot help believing that, when Abraham met Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, first king of righteousness, and then king of peace, and when he gave him tithes of all, and received his blessing, he recognised in Melchizedek one who was greater than himself; neither can I help believing that, after he had partaken of the bread and wine which Melchizedek brought to him, and had gone back to his own quiet oratory once more, he must—or at least he may—have had some clear intimation, to his own mind, that this was one of the grandest types of that seed which was to bless all nations of the earth. And, beloved, have not we seen Jesus as our Melchizedek? When we have been battling with the kings, when we have come back weary from the conflict, has not Jesus met us, and refreshed us with his bread and wine? Has he not blessed us, and have we not then adored him, and felt that we must say to him, concerning all that we have, "Take not merely a tithe, but take it all"? Blessed are the men and women who, with an Abrahamic eye, have spied out Christ beneath the robes of Melchizedek! And I cannot help thinking that if we, the children, can do so, he, the father of the faithful, must have done it also. Paul could clearly see Christ in Melchizedek; and surely Abraham also must have seen Christ in him.

But especially did Abraham see Christ's day in the type that was given him in Isaac. I cannot help thinking that, when Isaac was born, not after the flesh, but according to the promise,—for the seed according to the flesh was sent about his business, and his mother with him,—and when Abraham made a great feast at the weaning of that child whose very name was laughter, and the promise of whose birth had made the venerable patriarch, close upon his hundredth year, fall down upon his face, and laugh at the very thought; and whenever, afterwards, he looked upon that son of joy, given to him, not by the strength of nature, but by the visitation of God, he saw there a picture of him who is not born to us after the energy of manhood, but by the power of the Holy Ghost, and who has come among us to bless and cheer us till our very heart laughs again as we think of Jesus, the Son of the promise. He is our true Isaac. Now is our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue is full of praises as we think of him.

But, chiefly, did Abraham see Christ in type and figure on that

memorable day when he took Isaac up to the top of Mount Moriah, and, at the command of God, unsheathed his knife to slay his son. Abraham must then have seen the everlasting Father about to act in the same fashion towards his only-begotten Son. He saw, in Isaac, the victim bound and laid upon the altar, and then, in the ram caught in the thicket, he saw the very symbol of the Lamb of God, who, in the fulness of time, should be offered upon the altar of Calvary for our sakes, that he might die as our Substitute and Representative. There never could have been, I think, a more plain parallel than in this case, and in all these types Abraham saw Jesus Christ's day, and was glad.

Once more, Abraham did actually see Christ's day, not by faith only, but *in the disembodied state, after he was dead and buried*. There he slept, with Sarah, in the cave of Machpelah; but his spirit was neither dead nor buried, but it was in the place of souls separated from their bodies, and it is remarkable that, in the account of the death of Lazarus, our Lord says that he was taken to Abraham's bosom, as if the patriarch had given a name to that very world in which the gracious dwell when they quit this house of clay. From that place of bliss, he looked down upon all the wondrous life that began at Bethlehem, and closed at Calvary. He was seeing Christ's day even while Jesus was speaking to these Jews, and from the celestial seats he must have gazed with wonder that God should thus assume the nature of man.

II. That is enough concerning Abraham, except that we have to dwell, in the second place, for just a minute or two, upon THE EFFECT OF THIS VISION UPON ABRAHAM.

It made him glad; he rejoiced at the very thought of seeing Christ's day. It is a very strong word which is used there for rejoicing; "he leaped forward"—that would be the correct expression—at the thought of seeing Christ's day; and when he did see it, he was glad. It is a curious thing that the second word should be a softer one than the other. There is no idea of leaping or jumping about the second, but in the first, there is. Master Trapp renders it, "His good old heart danced levaltos within him, as children use to dance about a bonfire, with an exuberancy of joy," at the very thought that Jesus Christ would come in the flesh, and that he would see him; but when he did see him, that kind of rejoicing seemed to subside, and he appeared to rise into a calm state of intense gladness.

You know that, when Christ first makes us glad in him, we do not know how to contain ourselves; but, afterwards, our capacity increases, and we are able to hold more; there may be far less excitement, but there is more real joy after all. You remember how it is put in Isaiah xl. 31: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles;"—that is, when they are young and light;—"they shall run, and not be weary;"—that is, when they are getting a little stronger; they do not take to flying now, they know better, so they are content to run. But what comes next? "They shall walk, and not faint." The pace gradually gets less,—from flying to running, and from running to

walking. Is that a growth? Certainly; it is always better to walk than to run. Some young folk, when first they are converted, are very eager to fly. Fly away, brothers, while you can; and you who can run, run as fast as you are able; but, mark you, it is the steady pace, that does not kill, which enables us to live down death itself. I do not read that Enoch flew with God, or ran with God, but he "walked with God;" and he kept that pace up for three hundred years, and he could have kept it up even longer. Let a man fly while he may, let him run when he can; but walking is the best pace, after all. So, from our text, we learn that Abraham rejoiced and leaped forward to see Christ's day; and when he saw it, he sobered down, and was glad; and that is the best condition in which the spirit can remain. I cannot help thinking that it was this inward joy—this intense but calm gladness—that made Abraham such a noble man all through his life. Isaac is a very little man compared with his father Abraham. Where there is a high mountain, there generally is a low valley, so it was with Abraham and Isaac; and, as to Jacob, though he was a great man in some respects, and especially great at driving bargains, yet, somehow, he had nothing of the nobility of Abraham, who walked along in the dignity of a true prince among men. What a grand reply he gave to the king of Sodom who had said to him, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself." Though all the spoil was his by the laws of war, yet he answered, "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." No, no; Abraham was too great a man to stoop at the foot of the king of Sodom, even to take what was his by right. He had fought for him, and brought him back the spoil, and he handed it over to him without any diminution except that which had been eaten by the young men, or taken by the others who had gone with him,—his neighbours and friends who had a right to their share, although Abraham refused to take his portion of the plunder. The patriarch had many troubles; but, before his history is closed, it was recorded that "the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." He had believed God in all things, and God had blessed him in all things. His was a happy, calm, noble, dignified life, almost throughout the whole of it. Oh! that you and I might drink in deep draughts of Abraham's faith, and that our eyes might see Christ's day even more clearly than Abraham saw it, that we might have rejoicing and gladness like his! Nothing can so surely bring this joy to our souls as faith like that which he possessed.

III. So much for Abraham; now we come to ourselves, and enquire, IN WHAT RESPECTS DO WE SEE CHRIST'S DAY?

We stand, as it were, on a narrow neck of land between two seas of glory. Look back,—there is Christ's day of mercy,—salvation, reconciliation, death, conflict, victory. Now look forward, and see, by faith, that sight which the apostle describes, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;"—in splendour such as ne'er

was seen before, and which shall make the sun himself to be ashamed because of the greater glory of Christ, the Sun of righteousness.

Now let us ask ourselves, *have we really seen Christ in his first day?* Search your hearts, dear friends, and see. Have you looked to Christ as living, and working out a robe of spotless righteousness; and then, as dying, that he might dye that robe crimson, and make it fit for his chosen princes to wear? Have you seen Jesus on the cross bearing your sins? This is a sight that is indeed worth living for; heaven itself cannot match that sight, and there is nothing that can excel it. When we are in sin's densest darkness, that sight brings more light than the rising sun; and when we are cast out, like the dry bones of the valley of vision, it is this sight that makes us live again, and stand upon our feet, a part of the exceeding great army of God. Say, dear friend, have you looked to Christ by faith? Are you looking to him? Are you seeing his first day every day?

And then, *have you learnt to look forward to his second coming?* It is not a subject for curiosity, as some make it; it is not a subject for speculation, as others make it; but it is a subject for reverent expectation. I know not when he will come, but I know that he will come; he may come at any moment, and the sooner the better for me, for let him come when he may, he will be welcome; and if I am dead before he comes, I shall see his day all the same, "for I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Fix your eyes upon the coming King, for it will make you strong; you are not fighting for a vanquished leader. He has won the victory, and he will come back to wear the crown ere long. There is no question about who is to win the great fight; Christ has already won it, and he shall come back to divide the spoil with the strong. God has given it to him, and he shall have it. Harken to the trumpets that proclaim his appearing! Your faith may almost hear them sound, "Lo, he cometh! Lo, he cometh!" It is getting towards midnight in the history of the world. Both the wise and the foolish virgins are all too apt to go to sleep; but the cry may be heard even now by the ears of faith, and it will awaken us into supreme energy of action for our Lord, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." How little there is of that going out to meet him! Let us have something of it to-night as we go out, in imagination, and in faith, to meet him who cometh quickly. What countless trumpets then shall sound to wake the sleeping dead! Glory, glory, glory, to him that once was despised and rejected of men! Welcome, welcome, Son of God! All thy saints delight in thee; come quickly, come quickly; make no tarrying, O our God!

IV. Now, lastly, we are to consider THE EFFECT OF THESE SIGHTS UPON US. If we really see them, they will do for us what they did for Abraham, they will make us glad.

"Art thou weary? Art thou languid?  
Art thou sore distrest?"

Come, then, get a sight of the weary and languid One who died for

thee upon the tree. There is no gladness so easy to obtain as this. Is it not strange that, when the mourner's heart is heavy, we never hear that he looks to the place where the star of Bethlehem burns, though there is joy there; but he looks where human woe culminated in the death of the Well-beloved. To the cross the mourner turns his eyes, for there is no light that can come into the darkened heart except from the pierced side and broken heart of him whom we call Master and Lord. Do you want true joy? Then learn that joy was born where Christ died, and that joy lives because Jesus lives, it flourishes because he is risen. Keep your eyes on him, and they shall know no tears save those which shall bless both eyes and hearts.

Then, when you have found joy through looking on Christ's first coming, look forward to his second coming, and get joy out of it also. I cannot speak fully of that glorious event to-night; but, certainly, it is a well of joy. If you have seen Christ in his shame, it is a fountain of delight to expect to see him in his honour and glory. You are nobody now; the world knows you not, for it knew him not; but when he shall appear, then will be the time of your manifestation also. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Now it is often heartache and headache, weariness and toilsome pilgrimage; but when he comes, it will be the marriage feast, and all the merriment of which human hearts are capable. Oh, what a thrill of joy will go through this poor groaning world when he comes! Creation is in bondage, and continually groans, and "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body;" but when he comes, creation itself shall shake off its heavy weights, and shall get rid of its night dreams. Swathed in mist to-day, our poor planet scarcely gives forth a ray of light; but then, unwathed, with all mists removed, when Jesus comes, surely she shall shine more brightly than the morning star. And if every believer is to be as the sun, what will this world be, filled with believers, each one shining like the sun in his strength? Oh, clap your hands, beloved, clap your hands, for he cometh, who is your Lord and Saviour! "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Children of the morning, the morning cometh; what a day shall yours be then, when your sun shall go no more down for ever, for your Lord's coming shall be as a morning without clouds! Blessed and happy are they who, by faith, can see it. They can say good-bye to sin, and good-bye to sorrow; they can say to all discouragements, to all bafflings, to all defeats, "Farewell, for he cometh, our Champion, who will lead us forward to the everlasting victory, in whose name we set up our banners, and in whose name, even now, our spirit rejoices with exceeding gladness that shall never end."

God give to each of you to have a portion in these glorious things, by a simple faith in Jesus, for his name's sake! Amen.

## Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN VIII. 31—59.

Verse 31. *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed ;*

For there were many, in Christ's day, coming to him for a while, and then going away from him ; professing to believe, and then stumbling when Christ proclaimed some doctrine which struck them as being strange and hard to receive. Our Lord Jesus tells them that constancy is necessary to true discipleship. It is of no use to start running in the race unless we continue in the course till the prize is won. We are not true pilgrims to heaven merely because we cross the threshold of our door ; we must keep on, and on, and on, till we reach the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

32. *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

That is the result of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. With Christ, who is the truth, to be our Teacher, and the Holy Spirit to bless his words, we come to know the truth ; and the operation of the truth upon the heart is to deliver us from the bondage of sin and of error.

33. *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man : how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free ?*

What a falsehood this was of theirs ! They were at that very time in bondage to the Romans ; they had been subdued and conquered : and, a little while after, they themselves confessed that they had no king but Cæsar. Men are not very chary about telling falsehoods when they wish to resist Christ : they will do anything rather than believe on him.

34. *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

The man who habitually lives in sin is not a free man, for he is still a slave to sin. If he finds pleasure and delight in disobeying God, he has no right to talk about being a free man. His chains are rattling on his wrists ; what can he know about freedom ?

35. *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever ; but the son abideth ever.*

A servant may be dismissed from the household, but a son may not. If we were only servants of God, we might fall from grace, and perish ; but if we are the sons of God, we never shall. If we ever did, in truth, call God "Father," we shall always be able to use that blessed title, for the relationship of fatherhood is not a temporary one, and cannot come to an end.

36. *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

If you have the freedom of sonship, you are free indeed. There are none so free in our Father's house as his children are.

37—39. *I know that ye are Abraham's seed ; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father : and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*

The real descendants of "the father of the faithful" are themselves faithful ; that is, believers. The father of believers has believers for his children : "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." Our Lord had admitted that these Jews were Abraham's seed according to the flesh ; but he proved that they were not Abraham's seed in the high and spiritual sense, since they were not like him whom they claimed for a father.

40, 41. *But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father.*

He had not told them who that father was; but as it is a standing rule that men do the deeds of their father, the genuineness of the descent which they claimed could be tested by their likeness to their father.

41, 42. *Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me:*

Any man who is born of God must love Jesus Christ. The purity of his motives, the loveliness of his character, the charms of his person, would all be sure to win the heart of a man who was truly born of God.

42, 43. *For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.*

"You are dull of comprehension, you are hardened in heart, you are proud in spirit, you are just the opposite of everything that is good, and therefore you cannot hear my word," saith Christ; "and this is proof positive that you do not love God, and that you are not the children of God."

44. *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*

Remember from whose lips these words fell, even from the lips of the gentle Jesus. Honest speech is the surest token of a loving heart; but, nowadays, if a man preaches the truth plainly and faithfully, men say that he is hard and unkind; but if a man glosses over the truth, and alters it according to his own idea of what will please men, then they say, "He is a kindly-disposed and large-hearted man." I should be disposed to doubt whether he has any heart at all, if he will sooner see sinners damned than offend them by proclaiming the truth. I thank God that some of us care little about offending those who offend God. If men will not yield themselves unto the Lord, we want not their friendship, but we will strive to make them uneasy in their rebellion, and if they resolve to be lost, we will at least be clear of their blood.

44. *He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Falsehood is his natural element. When Satan deceives, he only acts according to his nature, which is blackened with falsehood through and through.

45, 46. *And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin?*

What a grand challenge! None of us can speak like that, except in a very modified sense; but Christ, standing before his enemies, who gnashed their teeth at him, and would have given their eyes to be able to fix some fault upon him, yet boldly says to them, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

46—51. *And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*

This statement quite staggered them; yet it is true. To believers,—

"It is not death to die;"

they simply pass out of this world into a larger and yet more glorious life. They descend not to death, but they rise to immortality.

52, 53. *Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?*

“What dost thou pretend to be? Someone greater than Abraham and the prophets?”

54—56. *Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham—*

“As ye call him”—

56, 57. *Rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?*

They allowed a wide margin in speaking of our Saviour's age, for he was only thirty-three years old. It may be true that the sorrows of his life had so marred his countenance that he looked more like a man of fifty than one of three-and-thirty. I cannot tell, nor do I know whether that is what they meant; but it is singular that they should have said to him, “Thou art not yet fifty years old.”

58. *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

They had asked him, “Whom makest thou thyself?” and now they have his answer: “Before Abraham was, I am,” saith Christ. It is the very name by which God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush, “I AM.” Yet Jesus takes this title to himself: “Before Abraham was,”—not, “I was;” notice that; but, “I am;” as if his life was one continued present existence, as indeed it is, for with God there is no past or future, but all things are ever-present to his infinite mind. When Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am,” he claimed the Godhead, he declared that he was certainly God, self-existent from all eternity.

59. *Then took they up stones to cast at him:*

They counted him a blasphemer, and so he was if he was not all he claimed to be. I have heard of some who reverence Christ, but do not believe him to be God: but how can that be? He evidently made himself out to be God, and this was the great charge the Jews brought against him. For this, indeed, they put him to death, because he made himself equal with God. If he was not equal with God,—if he was not really God,—he led men to think that he was; and if this was false, it was a great sin not consistent with the holy character of Christ. If he was not God, he was the grossest impostor who ever visited this world. But he was God, and nothing less; yet because he claimed this, the Jews took up stones to cast at him.

59. *But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

Glory be to his holy name for ever and ever!