

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A TYPE AND ITS TEACHING.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 3RD, 1916.

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.”—Genesis xxii. 8.

How stern the trial ; how striking the triumph ; how sublime, both in action and passion, was the faith of Abraham in that terrible crisis. It pleased God to try him on a very tender point. Abraham had received a great promise, on the fulfilment of which he greatly relied. Year after year elapsed, but no sign of the long-looked-for child appeared. At length old age crept over the patriarch and his wife. Still he looked steadfastly for the promise, because he believed implicitly in the Promiser. He considered not the infirmities of his own body, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb ; but he waited patiently, nothing doubting that God would in due time, according to his promise, give him a son. What marvel that this son, when born, should be the object of his fondest affection ! Moreover, a strange halo of hope gathers round the lad's head, for God has made him the heir of a covenant. It is in Isaac and in Isaac's seed that God will fulfil his covenant which he has made with Abraham. Nay, something more mysterious still is linked with that youth's life. It is in him that all the nations of the earth must be blessed. And now when the Lord says, “Take thy son, thine

only son Isaac, whom thou lovest," there is a cut in every word at the most tender part of Abraham's soul. To slay his own son, to cut off his hope of posterity, to sacrifice for a burnt-offering that son who was a special gift of God's bounty, to kill him in whom he looked for a further fulfilment of God's promise, to stop that golden pipe through which mercy is to flow to the whole world, to dam up that silver stream which is to enrich nations yet unborn—that were to blast Abraham's brightest hopes, as well as to wound his tenderest affections. God has cherished in him high anticipations. He has been pleased to give him strength of mind and faith of heart enough to see these expectations realised in a vision. And must that vision, after all, flit from before his eyes; must his faith become a delusion, and all his hopes a mockery? So it would seem. And yet mark the faith of Abraham. He not only submits to the loss of his choicest jewel, and to rend away one who was bound to his heart by ties stronger than flesh and blood; but in doing this he staggers not; for he still believes that God will be true to his promise. It strikes me that this was the master-work of Abraham's faith. To sacrifice Isaac was a wonder of patient submission and devout resignation, but the faith which was at the root of it all challenges our highest admiration. Still to believe that God is able to raise Isaac from the dead, or to turn the stones which were wet with Isaac's blood into a new offspring, or (for I know not which theory Abraham may have adopted) to believe that the whole covenant was spiritual, and that he must wait to see the seed of Isaac in another world, and not in this—in any case to believe that God must be true; that though Isaac died, God would keep his word, and that he is able to do so notwithstanding all apparent impossibilities—that he will transmute stones to men, or raise that body after it has been slain, into newness of life—here was the climax of a faith that realised the grandeur and the goodness of the divine attributes and perfections, for he simply and sincerely believed and relied upon God.

Ah! brethren, there are some men who can make great sacrifices for God; they have done so, and herein they have emulated the example of Abraham. But the patriarch showed a clear understanding; an unwavering calmness, a full assurance of hope, to which few have attained. When in the very act of presenting to God your sacrifice, can you account that you are losing nothing, but committing your treasure to his custody? Can you believe that the promise of God is not perilled by your parting with the earnest that gladdened your eyes? Has God given you a son, such an one as you can say of, "For this child I prayed"? Is he the pride of your life, and the joy of your life? Do you think of him as the solace of your age, and the perpetuator of your name in the world? What now if God shall call you to devote him as a missionary? Could you readily comply? Would you count it all gain? Should you interpret it as a blighting of your own prospect, or as

a blooming of God's purpose? Have you Abraham's faith? then let God be true, if heaven should reel and earth should rock. Though the sons of men pass away like shadows and death entomb us all, the counsel of God's heart shall stand, and his Word shall endure for ever.

Stagger not, my friends, at the promise of God through unbelief. Be assured that whatever he has promised he is able to perform.

Such reflections, though prolific of instruction, I must not tarry to pursue. I rather want to impress the scene and interpret the sentence brought before us in our text.

The scene itself *suggests to us three pictures*. The first picture will naturally rise up in your imagination without my attempting any graphic description of it. The old man, a kind and doting father, bears in his hands a sharp knife, and hot blazing coals of fire. The younger man, perhaps five-and-twenty—so Josephus thinks—possibly thirty-three years of age, and, if so, very manifestly the type of Christ, who was about that age when he came to die; the young man comes toiling up the side of the hill, bearing a load of wood upon his back. He knows that that wood is destined to burn some victim, for his father carries the fire and the knife. He understands that they are about to worship God yonder in the most solemn manner by a sacrifice of blood. On the way he puts but one question, marvelling where the victim can be. He sees the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb? saith he. Abraham tells him, with a bursting heart, that:—

I. GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB.

Little did Isaac think that he was to be that lamb. They come to the spot. No doubt Abraham there tells Isaac what God had bidden him do. The young man is strong; the old man has lost some of his youthful vigour. If that young man chose to struggle, the intent would be frustrated. But he, like his father, is ready to say to that sovereign command of God, "Here I am." He suffers himself to be bound by his aged sire, nay, helps to put himself upon the altar; and there he lies, a willing victim, cheerfully consenting to be bound, willing there and then to die at God's command.

Here you have a *picture of the Almighty One*, whom we every day address as "Our Father, who art in heaven." You see his son, his only Son, whom he loveth; his Isaac, who hath filled his heart with gladness. He bears upon his back the load of wood—the cross; nay, heavier than the cross is the load which the antitype of Isaac, our blessed Jesus, bears—the sin of all his people—lay heavy upon his shoulders. He turns upwards to the hill of Calvary; and there, in that thick darkness, through which no human eye could peer, however much it might desire it, God the eternal Father binds his Son. He cheerfully submits himself to be fastened to the tree. The Omnipotent hand unsheathes the knife to slay his Son, and draws not back, but in sovereign vengeance slays him. That picture

of Abraham with the knife in his hand, about to execute Isaac, presents to you a picture of the God of gods about to smite his only-begotten Son upon Mount Calvary.

Beloved, the one point on which I wish to concentrate your attention is *the emotion of the Father*. Oh! what grief, what love, what pity! What stern resolves, and strong affections must have striven together in Abraham's bosom! We read in ancient story of a father whose two sons were taken prisoners; they were both condemned to die. The old man appeared on the scene to offer up his life—all that he had to offer—and to die himself, if his sons' lives might be spared. For some reason the soldiers, melting to pity, went as far as they could, and told him he might have whichever of his sons he chose to be spared for the ransom. He looked first at one, and then at the other. He would fain say, "Spare that one," but then they would put the other to death; and he would fain say, "Spare this one," but then the other must die. And so the old man alternated between one and the other, undecided which should be released, till both were slain. History tells us of another case at the siege of Benda. A German nobleman, seeing a young man charging the hosts of the besiegers, remarked to those who stood by how valiantly he was fighting; he felt that a hero was in the camp. The enemy gathered so thickly round the warrior that at length he fell. "Give that young man a public funeral," said the nobleman. His counsel was accepted, a charge was made, the body was rescued. But judge his surprise as he looked down upon the face of the young man and perceived it was his only son. He stood aghast for a moment, no tears could he shed; his eyes were as though they would start from the sockets; he seemed transfixed; he fell backward; his heart was broken; his soul had taken its flight. Such a surprise, such a sorrow, such a sense of the loss he had sustained overwhelmed him. In neither of these cases had the father any hand in the death of his child. The parent in each instance was passive. Here, however, the knife must be handled by none other than the sire, and plunged into the vitals of his son. Oh! Abraham. Ah! Isaac. The tale of your trial makes my nerves tingle. But who of all the heavenly host, what angel near the throne can tell of the Eternal Father, how his heart was moved, how his bowels yearned! Do I speak after the manner of men; how else can I speak?

Reprove me when you can believe in a God who has no feelings, no emotions, no affections, no life, no love. Hardly could I subscribe to the dictum of theologians who pronounce God incapable of suffering. Surely he is capable of anything. He is sovereign of all senses and sacred sensibilities. His benignant tender Fatherhood are as clear to my faith as his eternal power and Godhead. How, then, can I conceive of his putting his own Son to death without a grief that I must defer to as possible, because I cannot describe it as actual? If we may not liken ourselves to God, yet

may God liken himself to us. This he has done; else had we not known him. Can you smite your own child without feeling more anguish than you inflict? Solomon says, "Spare not for his crying"; but it is hard to keep Solomon's advice, for the crying of your child makes you weep more than he does. Yet, behold how God, full of love, his very name being Love, smites even to the death his Only-begotten, till that darling cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And this was done out of love to us. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Oh! what love! His love is an indefinite quantity. It is expressed by an indefinite word—*so*! God *so* loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." What measure or gauge can compass that wonderful affirmation—he *so* loved? Rude as my sketch may be, royal indeed is the scene. Let it be vividly portrayed on the tablet of your memories. Let its gracious effect diffuse itself over your hearts. Oh! for such love as angels cannot know, let us reciprocate with a love intense and vehement that inflames our whole heart:—

"Had we a thousand hearts to give,
Lord, they should all be thine."

Even now, with adoring gratitude, offer your homage to the **Father, who gives his Son**, and to that Son, who cheerfully submits to plead by the altar for our sins.

A second picture rises to our view. You will remember that our Lord Jesus once said, "Abraham saw my day." When did he see it? Why, methinks it must have been on this occasion. The venerable patriarch certainly had in his son Isaac:—

II. A VIVID PICTURE OF THE SON OF GOD.

When you see that his hand is stayed, you perceive at once that the portrait is not complete. A ram is caught in the thicket; this ram is caught, laid hold on, dragged out, and put into the place of Isaac. So far the delineation is accurate, for the ram dies; it is really slain, even as Christ was sacrificed for us. But the vision changes its form. Isaac goes free; not so the ram. Isaac's blood still flows in his veins; not so that of the poor ram; the knife sternly severs his arteries, and the blood flows out. There he is laid upon the wood, which forthwith begins to glow and smoke for a burnt-offering. Isaac gazes on himself in a figure burning; he owes his life to the victim that was presented as a substitute. Look earnestly, gaze intently, linger fondly on the picture, for it represents your own salvation. Let us take the place of Isaac; it is ours. We are children according to promise. If we, beloved, have "fled for refuge to the hope set before us," we are saved.

How we are saved ye know. Because our Lord Jesus Christ, the ram of God's burnt-offering, did burn upon the altar for us, we are spared. It would baffle me to tell how Isaac felt when the cords were unbound, and he saw how narrowly he had escaped from death. Nor can I tell you how I felt when standing at the foot of the cross.

"I beheld the flowing
Of my dear Redeemer's blood
With assurance, knowing
He had made my peace with God."

How canst thou perish, believer, now that Christ hath died for thee? There is not a cord on Isaac as thou seest him now; he is free. So art thou, my friend; there are no bonds on thee. Most gratefully canst thou cry with David, "I am thy servant; and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds." As you gather round the Lord's table, do let the thought of substitution be fresh in your mind. He bore, that we might never bear the divine wrath; he drank the cup, even to its dregs, that we might never drink a drop of it; in short, he suffered hell's torments for us, that we might never enter its gates. My hearers, did Christ thus suffer for you? Yes, surely, if so be you are believing and depending upon him; then he was your true and proper substitute. Or if in his life you have no interest, then in his death you have no redemption, and his blood shall never save you; alas! alas! you must perish in your sins.

Pass from that scene; inspect it more narrowly, more privately another time. Let me now unveil to you another picture. Behold the aged parent, with glistening eye and placid brow, receiving his son, as it were, alive from the dead, when the angel stayed his hand. How joyously he cuts those cords; how they seem to leap together! I think I see them going homeward down the side of the hill to the tent where Sarah was. With what elastic step, with what grateful emotion, with what heartfelt joy they journey! And of what is this an emblem? Why, of:—

III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST JESUS, and in that of the resurrection of every believer. The Apostle Paul says that "Abraham received Isaac from the dead in a figure." Now our covenant God and Father has received his Only-begotten from the dead, not merely in figure, but in reality. The morning has broken, the sun has risen on the third day. He cannot be holden by the bonds of death any longer. He snaps them asunder, and in beauty incomparable the once slain Saviour arises from his sleep refreshed. The stone had been rolled away aforetime by the angel. He passes out, and the watchmen, in terror, fall on their faces affrighted. He manifests himself to Mary, and then to his disciples afterwards, saying, "Peace be unto you," and in due time he ascends up to

the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Angel hosts escort him with trumpets' joyful sound.

“They bring his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne;
Clap their triumphant wings, and cry,
‘The glorious work is done.’”

Oh! ye saints, celebrate the triumph afresh. Your Lord and Saviour is risen and ascended. Isaac is not dead. He, in whom all nations of the earth shall be blessed, lives, for ever lives. In him, the child of promise, the seed of the woman, art thou now a heritor of the blessing if thou believest. In him shalt thou rise again. Though thy flesh shall see corruption, thou shalt burst the bonds of death, and, because he lives, thou shalt live also.

“Nor doth it yet appear
How great thou shalt be made,
Yet when thou seest thy Saviour here,
Thou shalt be like thy Head.”

Have these pictures impressed your minds? May the meditation they excite prove instructive to you! But lend me your ears while I proceed to commend to you the sweet prophetic words of Abraham.

The name of the Lord—that particular name, Jehovah-jireh—has been the comfort of many an indigent believer, and sustained him under great difficulty. Sometimes it has been to him like the cake baked upon the coals, of which Elias partook when he journeyed for forty days. Oh! how graciously God has provided himself a burnt-offering; the choicest substitute for the most undeserving criminal. Lies there a wretch in Newgate, for whom a royal scion would stand surety? No novelist would broach such a fiction. “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; peradventure for a good man one might even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.” If every one of us had been left to endure the penalty of our own transgressions, had no substitute been found to bear our sins, God would have been unimpeachably just and infinitely glorious.

The voice of our torments would have only been a deep bass note to tell out to the universe the terrible justice of the Most High. It could not have impeached his mercy. To find a substitute was an act of gratuitous, undeserved grace. Such provision was not only undeserved, but it was most unexpected. What amazement must have wrapt the sky when celestial creatures heard that a substitute for man was found! Where? Among angels, principalities, or powers? No; but at God's right hand. The co-equal Son himself becomes the substitute for rebel man. Nor less in dignity than the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person, is he who takes upon himself flesh and blood, and subjects himself to our infirmities, that he himself may bear our sins, in his own body on the tree. Are we indifferent, or are

we incredulous, or what manner of men are we that one can talk and another can listen to so startling a fact, to so astounding a revelation, without a thrilling emotion, a faltering tongue, and tingling ears? Throughout eternity this will be a ceaseless wonder in heaven. That the Creator should stoop to bear the creature's sin will never cease to be a mystery of mercy that challenges endless admiration. God did indeed provide such a provision as makes his providence startling! What a gospel it is! Great God, wilt thou redeem sinners, at such a cost, at no less price than blood—and that the blood of Immanuel? And is it so that Jehovah must veil himself in human flesh? Must the Infinite become an infant? Must the Omnipotent hang on a woman's breast? Must the eternal self-existent God breathe out an expiring life in ignominy and torture? Must all this be experienced by the Man who is Jehovah's fellow? Yes. Manhood comes into such union with Deity that we cannot divide the two. There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Oh! what a step was this—from the highest throne of glory to the cross of deepest woe! Well did an apostle say, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Silver and gold! what are they in comparison with this costly sacrifice? The merest tinsel, the sweepings of dross, not worthy to be thought of in the same minute as the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

St. Augustine somewhere holds a kind of controversy with himself as to whether Christ shall die or not. As if he said, Yes, let the sinner live, but Christ must die. No; he must not die, he is far too good, too great to die; then let the creature die. Nay, but we cannot let the creature perish; God's mercy would prevent that. Then he must die. Then he seems to say, No, the price is too great. Sooner let them perish than buy them at such a price. A company of worms redeemed by the blood of the Son of God! The price is too high; yet God paid it. Oh! let us love and bless his name!

Though it was so costly a provision, it was the most suitable that could be devised! Who else could have borne our sins but God? No mere man could possibly have stood as the substitute for millions of the human race. He might, if innocent himself, suffer for one, and so save one; but unless Deity should lend its unutterable perfections, it was not possible for human nature to sustain the weight of human guilt. But now by the suffering of a man the law is vindicated and honoured; by the personal interposition of God, sacred validity and sovereign efficacy are imparted to the great work he has achieved. And oh! what an effectual provision it is! for the blood of Christ has saved, does save, and will save millions of souls. Whatever else may be a myth, the atonement is a veritable fact. Whatever empty rites and worthless pretensions may be foisted on credulous men and silly women, you cannot exaggerate

the power of the blood of Christ. Come hither, come hither, ye blackest, foulest, vilest of mankind; try it, and see if the crimson streams do not wash your crimson stains, and make you white as snow. Come hither, ye old transgressors, steeped in infamy, quivering on the brink of hell, see if the drops of this blessed stream cannot cool your fevered brow, and give your troubled conscience rest. Come hither, ye distracted maniacs, who would fain lay suicidal hands upon yourselves, and rush blood-red into your Maker's awful presence, and see if, bowing down before that awful cross, you do not hear a voice that saith, "Peace be still. Go thy way; thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." Yes, there is life in a look at the Crucified One. None shall ever look to him in vain. Millions of spirits around the throne rejoice in the efficacy of God's provision. Jehovah-jireh is extolled to-day in matchless songs of human praise around the starry throne, and here on earth we repeat their strains with glad accord.

"Dear, dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

And then, once more, it is an ample provision. God has provided a ram for a burnt-offering, and there is enough efficacy in that sacrifice for all that seek the ransom it supplies. I do not preach a stinted salvation, blessed be God. I have seen in my soul the vision that Zachariah saw. He saw a young man, with a measuring line in his hand. "Whither goest thou?" said he. "To take the dimensions of Jerusalem," he replied; "to see the breadth and the length thereof." "Run, speak to this young man," said the angel; "measure not the city; Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitudes of men therein."

Some people have a strange disposition to use the measuring line, and count the population, and number the souls that are saved by the precious blood of Jesus. Their estimate is commonly limited to a very few. Let us not measure it, for we know not what countless multitudes will be given to Christ for the travail of his soul. A multitude that no man can number has gathered already; on the way there is a host, defying human arithmetic, that will be marshalled there, and still they muster day by day. O beloved, this one thing we know, without entering into any vexed questions of particular redemption or general redemption, there is enough in Christ for every sinner that desires salvation, and comes and puts his trust in the Saviour; enough to cleanse the vilest sin that ever disgraced humanity; enough to wash you white, though you are ever so begrimed; it is provision for the sins of all ages, of all ranks, of all conditions. The harlot, cleansed here, becomes chaste, and sings, with Rahab, the new song. The thief, washed here, becomes forgiven, and is accepted in the Beloved. If you

are the most abandoned of sinners, and have strolled in here to gratify curiosity or to idle away an hour, let me tell you that he who died, the just for the unjust, ever liveth; he is mighty to save. Rest on Jesus, there is provision here to save you; with his infinite foreknowledge he has foreseen your case. You shall never find a case too hard for the Master; no sin too heinous for him to forgive; no circumstance so extravagant in its guilt as to go beyond the grace and the generosity which are treasured up in Christ Jesus, and the goodness and virtue flowing from his wounds.

I have painted the pictures; I have proclaimed the purpose; let me conclude with:—

IV. A POINTED QUESTION.

Since God has provided so great a sacrifice, has he provided it for me? Am I a participator in the blood of Christ? To how many thousands of you do I speak? Do let each one put the question to himself. My weak voice will soon exhaust its emphasis. Is there no echo in your conscience? What I say may drop from your memories. Do let every soul among you earnestly enquire, "Have I Christ?" Give yourself a candid reply concerning yourself. Do you put your trust in him? I do not ask you what possessions you can boast. The poor are very welcome in God's house. I do not ask you what reputation you have. The wise are not elected for their wisdom with God; the foolish and the base are not rejected for their worthlessness. What I do ask is this, "Have you Christ for your portion?" Remember, soul, that whosoever believeth in Jesus receiveth him as God's gift to his soul. Trust Christ, and he is yours. Fall flat upon your face upon the promises of God in Christ. Have done with all the props on which you were wont to lean, with all the pleas on which you were wont to rely, with all the works of which you were wont to boast. Go as thou art to Christ, trust him. To him the Spirit of God leads every earnest, anxious seeker. If you trust him, heaven and earth may pass away, but the promise of your salvation shall not fail. You shall be his in life, in death, in judgment, and in eternity, safe from hell, secure of heaven.

What though you struggle with all your natural feelings as Abraham did? The more simple your faith, the more signal will be your triumph. Believe in the dark, and you shall soon come into the light. Immediately you believe, there are signs following. Venture to-day to lay your hands upon that dear head of the victim Lamb, and to-morrow I will summon you as witnesses who can testify to others that there is joy and peace in believing. "He will deliver thy soul from going down into the pit, and thy life shall see the light. Lo! all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living!" May this be yours! Amen.