

The Call of the Bride

The Substance of a Lecture on Genesis 24.

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We live in a time when everything is questioned; at least everything that is of God; and in reading this chapter to you this evening, I am glad to present the truth of God from that part of His word which, if it has been the object of especial attack, furnishes the simplest and plainest witness to the prescient wisdom and goodness of Him who wrote it for our instruction.

It would not be intelligent for anyone to look for the revelation of the church of God here. There is no intimation of the union of Jew and Gentile in one body. But, when the mystery was revealed, those who bow to Scripture can see how God had prepared its place and type, although its character was not yet revealed. Nor is this so merely in an isolated point, but there is a well-defined connection of truth clearly foreshown in what precedes and follows. What a testimony, then, if this be so, have we here to the absoluteness of inspiration! Some have looked at Scripture as containing God's word, but not as itself His word. An actual sample from the middle of a book like the present will be found to bespeak God in every word.

The portion to which I direct your attention now commences with Genesis 22. This is not an arbitrary beginning. The chapter is introduced thus: "And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham." It is a new set of divine pictures of the truth. The father is asked to give up his son, "thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest" — an unheard-of trial; to offer him as a burnt-offering on a mountain of Moriah. Under sentence of death the son rests till the third day; then, when the surrender was proved complete, and the hand stretched forth, and the knife to slay the son, the hand of the father is arrested, and a ram, caught by his horns in the thicket, is substituted. Thus did God provide for Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering; for no type can reach up to the height or go down into the depth of the truth: God's Son is God's Lamb.

Perhaps there is no child of God who has not learned that we have here a shadow of the offering of His Son. This every soul that values Scripture and bows to the corresponding light of the New Testament, must acknowledge. But this is not all. The Holy Ghost confirms it by signatures which show His hand and mind. The very order is instructive. Most, we know, are apt to be content with less. They see the love of God set forth in the sacrifice provided; they see the substitution of the ram answering to Him who died for our sins. And there they stop; but the New Testament does not. In Hebrews 11 the apostle Paul gives us most distinctly another step, telling us that "Abraham offered up his only-begotten, of whom it was said, 'that in Isaac shall thy seed be called': accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." That is, it is intimated that in Genesis 22 we have a shadow, not merely of the death, but also of the resurrection of Christ.

But there is another allusion to this scene in the New Testament, to which we must turn for a little in the third place. It is found in the use the apostle makes of it in Galatians 3. He there lays the greatest stress on the one Seed as contrasted with many: a use of Genesis which is often a great difficulty even to believers. They cannot doubt the statement made, yet feel that they do not understand it. They know that "seed" in all languages may mean many, just as much as one; and so they are conscious that the force of the passage escapes them. Paul must be right, they are assured; why, or what he means, they

know not. When men raise difficulties, they are apt to go farther and judge the word which is beyond them. They would do far better if they would look to God as well as into the word of His grace.

The point here I believe to be this: the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham out of heaven, and, after Isaac was taken from under the knife (the figure of death), Abraham is shown the ram, and offers it: and then the angel of Jehovah called a second time, and said, "By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." This sorely perplexes the hasty reader. How strange the apostle should lay the greatest stress upon "one seed," whereas the text seems to speak of very many! But read more, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Now we come to the point in Galatians.

There are two kinds of blessing before us; not only two measures but two orders of blessing. The blessing of a numerous seed comes first; and here, where number is attached to the seed, the blessing is distinctly Jewish in character, down to possessing the gate of their enemies. By and by God will assuredly make this good; He means to bless as well as to deliver His earthly people; He will maintain the divine government of the world in Israel. He intends to make all good when Satan has made the worst of it. His purpose is to wrest out of the hand of the destroyer his seeming victory. And when His people are brought down to the lowest, then will be God's opportunity. He will lift them up, and set them at the head of all earth's blessing and glory. The prophets are full of this, but the earliest book pledges it, and this in connection with the sacrifice of Isaac in the figure.

But there is more to be noticed, and more closely. The same apostle lays stress on the one Seed; and with the one Seed presents another character of blessing; and this is the emphasis in writing to the Galatians. The enemy was trying to make the believers in Galatia become Jews (of course, in principle only, not in fact), in order to ensure the blessing, insisting on circumcision for the purpose. Thus they were in danger of surrendering all that was most precious in Christianity. The apostle seeks to recall them, and that in this way; where the one Seed is spoken of (without reference to number, not the numerous seed), there is blessing to the Gentiles promised, and to the Jew distinctively. This he applies to Christ risen, "and in thy seed (where there is nothing about the sand or the stars) — shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." It is not the gate of their enemies possessed by the Jews, but the Gentiles to be blessed; the former in relation to the numerous seed, the latter in relation to the one Seed. I repeat, this is the point of Galatians 3: 16. Our blessing is not even with Christ Himself as Messiah here below, but with Him who was crucified and is risen from the dead. In short, it is a character of blessing altogether new on the other side of death, with the risen Lord Jesus, the one Seed. "So we become Abraham's seed, not by being circumcised, which is on this side of death, but by faith in Him who died and is raised again. It is before God the complete blotting out of man in the flesh, and the introduction of a new man in the risen Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile. And faith acts on what is before God.

There is also another thing which is an immense difficulty to many in this connection. Sarah dies in Genesis 23. According to doctrine too common in Christendom, Sarah ought to be henceforth alive and vigorous. Such, I am persuaded, would have been the ordering of the type if man had arranged it, for such is the thought current in theology. But according to Scripture Sarah dies; it is not Hagar, the old covenant after the flesh, but the mother of the Seed of promise, who then passes away. What is the meaning of this? If Genesis 22 have its clear illustration in the Lord's death and resurrection, and His purpose forthwith to bless the Gentiles in Christ with a totally different kind of blessing from that of Israel, however true it also is to be in its season, what is the meaning of the death of Sarah at this point?

The Acts of the Apostles may make all quite plain. After the gift of the Holy Ghost the apostles presented the Lord Jesus to Israel as such, addressing them as "men of Israel," and pledging the truth of God to the assurance that, if they only repented and received Him they had put to death on the cross who was now risen by the mighty power of God, all His promises would be made good to them. This is very particularly marked in Acts 3. "The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our father hath glorified His Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses." And again, "Those things which God before hath shown by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

Is it not evident that here is the distinct proffer of God through His servant to make good all that was promised to Israel? But they refused. The consequence was, that His offer for the time entirely lapsed. Sarah dies. There is no more presentation of the covenant of promise. Thus it had been made in the close of Acts 3. "Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed; unto you, first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Such was the offer; but the offer was rejected, the consequence of which we see in no further presenting the word of the Lord after that sort, in no subsequent overture to Israel on any such ground. Sarah dies. It is not that Sarah is not to rise again, and, as surely as she is literally to rise again, so shall the covenant of grace reappear, under the returning Son of man, for both houses of Israel.

What follows according to the Acts? An extraordinary apostle is called out, and fresh ground is taken; nay, it is too little to speak of the change so. The secret that was kept hid from ages and generations is told out by a new and suited instrument. Saul of Tarsus becomes the characteristic witness not to the mother of the Seed of promise, not to the accomplishment of what God has pledged Himself from the first to make good to the line of Abraham; but a bride is to be called out from the world, formed and fashioned and got ready for the risen Bridegroom. The apostle Paul becomes the special and typical "minister of the church." Thus do the Old and the New Testaments perfectly tally together.

Just so in our next chapter, Genesis 24, follows a wholly new scene, in the most significant way corroborating what has been said; and this I shall endeavour to pursue as God has given it. "And Abraham was old and well stricken in age, and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things, and Abraham said unto his eldest servant in his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell, but thou shalt go into my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."

The Canaanites, as everyone moderately taught knows, were the future enemies of the chosen people, already in the land, Satan's instrument to exclude, if this were possible, or at least to expose and corrupt, those who were called of God. They typify, according to Ephesians 6, our foes, the world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, with whom our conflict has to be maintained. Accordingly, it is, as all will admit, not from demons or fallen angels that God calls to the fellowship of His Son. It is from the world that sovereign grace is forming a bride for Christ.

This then is the charge of the father to his steward, servant over all that he had, "Thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." The servant has his fears, at least he presents his difficulties. "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?" And Abraham said unto him, "Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again. The Jehovah God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again." There is no one point more insisted upon in the chapter than this: Isaac, the risen son, is to remain exclusively in Canaan; on no account is he to leave it.

Let us compare him with others. Abraham had been called out from Mesopotamia himself, and thence had he brought his wife. Afterwards Jacob goes back from Canaan, and far away he marries Leah and Rachel, and thence returns. But, while the call of the new bride goes on to Mesopotamia, Isaac must remain in the place which is the well-known type of heaven; at least, during that transaction, the bridegroom abides only in Canaan. The Son of the Father, while the bride is being called, has no relation with the world, and is seen exclusively in heaven at the right hand of God. And this is just as distinct as to Christ in the New Testament doctrine, as the injunction respecting Isaac is imperative throughout its type in Genesis. It is an infinite privilege to be blessed with Christ; to be blessed not only by Him but with Him, and not only with Him but with Him in heaven in the presence of God. But such is our blessing, who are in the place whence He has been ignominiously cast out; and our blessing is in Him now, while He is on the right hand of God.

Is not this the heavenly place of Christ which the Spirit of God shows Himself pressing with manifest care in the chapter just read? "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land; must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again." During the call of the church, Christ sustains no direct relationship with the earth; He is simply the glorified Head on high. Before this He had come to the earth; and it was here, and here only, although in Him lifted up from the earth on the cross, that God's mighty work of redemption could be accomplished by His son, whom the Father spared not but gave for us all. Here man had sinned, and here sin must be judged; but it is in heaven, and only in heaven, that Christ is viewed in relation to the bride. It is from heaven that the Holy Ghost comes down; it is for the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven that the bride is destined, and it is while the risen Bridegroom is in heaven that she is in process of being formed here below, before He comes to receive the saints to Himself and present them above.

This settles many a grave question. And it is Christians particularly who trouble themselves about the matter; for others count it fanaticism, and are not interested in it. Your association with Christ as the heavenly Head is, therefore, what Satan wants to frustrate; for if your strength and blessing depend on your seizing your true relationship to Christ and the reality of Christ's relationship to you, the effort of the foe is to sever all he can between Christ and the church; while the active working of God's Spirit is to put and keep the believer, and not only the individual but the church, in the living present consciousness of His and our relationship, for God is looking for conduct founded upon it. How, then, can the suited conduct be, unless you know the standing and relation on which it depends and from which it flows? The affection, and the intimate union, and the obedience which belong to the wife, are inseparable from her relationship. In another they would be most improper and the grossest sin. If the wife does not so walk, she utterly fails. But the known relationship is the ground of the duties that we

owe.

In the midst of the then revealed scene which a Jew, perhaps some Christians, might regard merely as a domestic story, the Spirit of God has traced out the typical lineaments of our call and relationship to Christ, all-important to our souls now, the sweeter because one sees from Genesis how it was from early days before God; as indeed, we know from the New Testament, it was purposed in Christ before the world was. Here we see its shadow, and what seems to me of high value, in relation to the system of promise on the one hand and, above all, to the sacrifice of the Son of God on the other.

But we have to notice also other notable features that fill in the sketch, and befit such a scene. Let me again impress on you the great truth that even here we see the church is founded on the finished work of Christ, as an accomplished fact; yea not only on death but also on resurrection. Here the Son is risen and stands in a new place altogether. In this place Christ is found under the representation of Isaac, received from the dead in a figure, who, keeping himself entirely to Canaan, is in the acknowledged and undeniable type of heaven. When we think of the previous history of Abraham, or of that which follows in the case of Jacob, Joseph, or any other, the solemn restriction of Isaac alone is the more remarkable. We see what a tendency there was for the family likeness to repeat itself throughout, from father to son. This makes it all the more striking as a fact; how much more when we see its full meaning in Christ as our heavenly Head and Bridegroom now! Isaac had that typical place all to himself. There was no one of the patriarchs so remarkably seen in Canaan from first to last, so emphatically there alone in relation to the call of Rebecca. If God would set forth a Bridegroom exclusively heavenly, how else could He do it so effectually? Isaac is on no pretext and for no end to quit Canaan, whatever the difficulties of bringing home the bride.

The Spirit of God, we already remarked, brings out the same truth openly to us in the Epistles of the New Testament, and in substance too in the latter part of John's Gospel, where Christ is shown putting us in His own place above. Yet in the Old Testament Christ is often presented as the one who should reign over Israel, restored and blessed in their land; who should judge and rule all nations. And so without fail, He will, for Scripture cannot be broken; and if the Word of God could waver for the earth, who could trust it for heaven? The Psalms and Prophets are full of glowing visions of the day when the once humbled Messiah shall reign from sea to sea and bring the days of heaven on the earth; and hence the saints of old, though not without heavenly outlooks, as we know from Hebrews, regarded justly the earth as the future sphere of manifested blessing, though not of course the earth exclusively. Without doubt, then, Christ will ask, and Jehovah will give the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. But that day of asking and having them, and consequently of judgment on the quick (Ps. 2: 8, 6) is in contrast with what is true now (John 17), when He asks not for the world as then but for ourselves while He is on high. It is the true Isaac thus imprinting a heavenly character on souls on the earth; giving them not merely that their destination should be heavenly by and by, but withal, even now, a heavenly stamp from and with Himself while they are here as consciously belonging to Him there.

The time, too, was come for this wondrous display of faith. The Lord Jesus had gone down to the depths of atonement. He had also been utterly rejected by the Jews, and God had now rejected them and the earth's direct blessing as such for the time; for this depends on their reception, which will be to the world as life from the dead. Hence it is not on the earth which cast out the Righteous One, but in heaven that righteousness is seen now, where God has glorified the Holy One whom man despised and refused; and those who receive Him meanwhile are made God's righteousness in Him. Thus the actual grace of God is richer than any promises, for God never limited Himself to a promise. Could He indeed allow such a thought as that He, or His giving in grace, was exhaustible?

The grand fact for us, in the face of the devil who led the world to put Jesus to death, is that God has raised Him up from the dead after suffering for our sins, and set Him in heavenly glory, while He calls out from the world, not only individuals to be blessed with Christ, but forms them by His Spirit into His assembly, one body, the body of Christ, whilst He is there and we are here. And, if you really have the spirit of Christ now, that is your relationship. You are a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, spite of your thoughts or of that which men have told you. And, as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. If you believe in Him, be not afraid of confessing Him, nor doubt your blessedness, nor be ashamed of Him or it in any way. What a sorrow to have to press this truth when the church should be living in the full joy of it! How sad that we have now to recall God's children to that which His grace gave them, to what is their own, but alas forgotten! God decides (it is not ours to choose) our relationship in Christ. I have heard one say, thinking it lowly, too, "I dare not ask to be a son of God; I am content to be His servant." Alas, it is real unbelief, not humility. For this does not mean measuring ourselves by ourselves or others, but seeing that Christ has suffered all, that God might bless accordingly, and bring us into relationships according to the work of redemption and the glory of Him who wrought it, in the fulfilment of the divine counsels for magnifying Him.

Is Christ, then, the "Heavenly" One now? "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." If there are heavenly ones, who are they? Not the angels. The good angels are not taken out of their position, and the bad angels are yet to be dealt with judicially. Grace acts to the full; and the last whom nature could suppose chosen are those to whom God vouchsafes the richest blessing. Such is the position of the Christian and the church, however little we may have done for His name. Our deliverance and our relationship are questions of Him and His work; not of those who reap the blessing through the grace of God. I do not say that you may not know your heavenly place individually, or with all saints, or your responsibility in both respects as God's temple. I do say you must seek to lay hold of your relationship before you can manifest the affection and the ways suitable to it. Who could expect the conduct of a son save from a child that knew his father?

It is precisely the same principle in the sphere of Christ and the church. The man, not the woman, determines her position and dignity according to his own. He was, He will be, on earth; but now He is in heaven, and so alone we know Him: yea had we known Him otherwise, so only now. The relationship is established, and for us, too, in this blessed way, through the Christ who has baptized us into one body by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The cross made it possible, having cleared away sin by the judgment of it once for all; not by forbearance, though there was a time when God did forbear as to it, but now in righteousness, for grace reigns through righteousness, sin having been judged, so judged as it never will be in hell, and as it never can be again. Faith bows to God, and receives through and with Christ this heavenly portion; believing on the Lord Jesus, we are united to Him. On high the suffering Man was given to the church, Head over all things. He must go through death first; for, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." The word of God makes it perfectly certain that the Lord Jesus, only after redemption, became at the right hand of God the Head of His body, now in process of forming by the Spirit on earth. There was no such state of things when He was on earth. In no respect was He our Head until He took His place on high; nor could the body be so much as begun till Christ was there as Head, to whom the Holy Ghost could unite us. For it is neither an awakened conscience nor even faith which unites, but the Spirit given to us over and above as believers. I repeat, that I believe as an individual; and this is of all moment, and of the greatest value for the soul of each. If conscience be unsettled, there cannot be the right flow of divine affection; and it was part of God's way and wisdom to leave no questions before we are united to Christ by the Spirit.

We must distinguish between the new birth and the baptism of the Spirit. As sinners we are quickened; as saints we have the Spirit given to us, whether as individuals or for union. Suppose a woman, the most obscure you could find, whose only name was of ill repute; but one of the noblest of the land, of the most exalted character and position, was pleased to make her the object of his love, and, more than that, to give her his own name as his bride, what then? In an instant all is changed; no matter what she may have been before, all now depends on the new relationship, both for others and especially for herself. No unbelief of believers puts that blessing off until we get to heaven; but, according to God's word (and this alone is binding), it is true of us here, though the practical power, enjoyment, and testimony are lost now if we believe it not. We are of Christ's body now. There is no such doctrine as becoming members of His body in heaven. Because it is a question of Christ and His work made known by the Spirit sent down, there is nothing too good for the church in the mind of God, who is glorifying Him and blessing us in Him. It is here, too, that we are called to suffer with Him. All saints had to suffer, and Christians especially, not only for righteousness but for Christ; and this people do not like.

Unbelief likes the safe middle way of good common sense; it is afraid of extremes because it slights Christ. It courts ease and honour now, and hopes to have forgiveness and acceptance above. This is not Christianity, but the revival of a semi-Judaism, which destroys the true relationship and testimony of the church. The truth may sometimes be presented crudely and with looseness, and Satan would thus make it ridiculous to the natural man and its form repulsive to a spiritual mind. This is to be deplored, and should be owned, not justified by him who feels for God's glory. But we cannot pare down the truth, or make it palatable to the world or to the Christians who seek to walk with the world. Everything that is according to God must flow from faith; the faith of the saint (I say not of the soul in coming to God) is formed by its object, even Christ, now in glory, to whom the person is united and by whom he is more and more changed into His image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, from glory to glory. Doubtless, till a man's soul has bowed to God in the sense of his own sinfulness, and has found redemption by the blood of Jesus, it is folly and wrong to talk of other and heavenly privileges. But, when all need of conscience before God is settled by faith, the Spirit seals the believer, who is made one with Christ in heaven.

It will be seen from Scripture, in fact, that without faith there is no union; but faith in itself never unites. There is no such idea as a person united to Christ in believing; but, when he believes, he is made one with Christ by the Holy Ghost, who has now condescended to take the place of serving the counsels of the Father for the glory of His beloved Son. As the Son became servant in doing God's will here below, so now the Spirit glorifies Christ in communion with the Father's mind and love. And this could only be when Christ went on high, after His finished work, and sent the Comforter to be in and with us forever.

One result we see beautifully depicted here is the spirit of faith in which the servant acts, and this showing itself in prayer according to the mind of God. "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water. And he said, O Jehovah God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water; And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast

showed kindness unto my master. And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder." Does not the case illustrate vividly "praying in the Holy Ghost"? It is prayer, not merely for this or that, but in the current of what is for the Son's glory and in the Father's purpose to bestow. It seems to be the liveliest anticipation in the Old Testament of asking the Father in Christ's name, by having whatever we thus ask. I speak of the spirit of the thing.

Is it then a casual circumstance that such passages should be found here? What a contrast with Jacob's vow in Genesis 28, or his cry of distress in Genesis 32! Indeed, it is not too much to say that there is not another chapter in Genesis where there is so much about prayer as here; and why? Is it not because now, during the call of the bride, the walking by faith is exemplified by Him who dwells and works in the Christian? Assuredly God looks for no less habits of dependence in those who bear the name of Christ. Of course, at every time from the beginning of God's ways with man, all prayed who had faith; and we see it admirably in Abraham and others. But I appeal to every discerning mind whether we do not find such a type in this respect here, as we find nowhere else in the book.

There is another feature, too; the Holy Ghost has come down in a way that never was made good before. As surely as the Son descended personally to the earth to take flesh, so the Holy Ghost came to abide in and with us now. He had come down to abide in the Son, He sealed, and without blood, Him who was the Holy One of God. But how could we, sinners as we were, have His Spirit in us? How could we be the vessels of the Holy Spirit of God? Only in the power, the perfect and perfecting sacrifice of Christ. After that, not before, the Holy Ghost came down to dwell in those who had been most wretched sinners; and He can dwell in us forever now by virtue of the blood that cleanses us from all sin. Has this no voice to us, beloved brethren? A most solemn thing it is for all Christians. We need, and should cultivate that spirit of faith and prayer which keeps us practically in the presence of God where flesh is judged, knowing that He hears us, and that we have the petitions that we desire of Him.

But this is not the only thing here. The same servant who represents the power of the Spirit acting in man now, shows also the wonderful faithfulness in which God not only guides him, but controls for him all circumstances: just as at the beginning of the chapter, it was not merely as Jehovah-God Abraham acknowledged Him, but as, "the God of heaven and the God of the earth." And so, yet more should the Christian feel now, according to the infinite largeness of the revelations of His glory as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, in Ephesians 4. He shows Himself to be above all and through all, as well as in us all. It is not only that we are brought into the utmost nearness by grace; but, despised as we may be and cast out for Christ's sake, we are, and should know that we are, as children in that intimacy which enables us to speak to Him who moves all things. Just as the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels' weight of gold (vers. 22, 30), so to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Compare Eph. 4: 7-16).

Again, the heart of the servant instantly turns to worship. "And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the Jehovah God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth; I being in the way, Jehovah led me to the house of my master's brethren." It was, no doubt, homage rather than worship in the proper Christian sense; that is, it was individual, not the praise of God's children or assembly. Still it is the figure of worship. Did it ever strike you that there is more about such homage or worship in this chapter than in all the other chapters of Genesis put together? Why should it be so? Can one doubt that it is because now God has made the way for true worshippers? According to truth, and according to love, God has now revealed Himself in Christ the Son. He is no longer groped after, if haply He may be found; but the

God and Father of Christ has brought us to Himself, His Father and ours, His God and ours, having not only come down to us in Him here below, but brought us in Him, dead and risen and ascended, to be before Himself without a spot. How could we then but worship Him?

And so, as surely as souls enter into the place of the Christian and the church, worship in spirit and in truth flows forth. God is revealed in His grace, redemption is wrought, the veil is rent, and we are brought now as sons, and have God dwelling in us. The Spirit of God could not but lead the children of God to worship. The first Epistle to the Corinthians accordingly speaks to them of singing with the spirit, though we know what their state was; and in Ephesians and Colossians we hear of "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." This supposes a relationship which cannot but thus breathe itself out to God in praise and thanksgiving. How different from occupation with self, important as this alas! may be in its place and season. There is a right time for all things, and for general humiliation, too; and a dangerous thing it is for a Christian not to judge himself and take a humbling review of his ways sometimes. But, whatever in us may call for self-judgment, let us never defraud our God and Father of His worship. Let us neither mar nor stint the praises of God and the Lamb. Therefore we find, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

In our narrative, in full unison as far as the type could reach, we have the sense of God and His blessing filling the heart of Eliezer; and so the man bows his head and worships continually as God displays His grace. (Compare verses 48, 52.)

Notice again the way in which the calling of the bride links itself with the coming of the Lord. The question is put to Rebekah, "Wilt thou go with this man?" Nature might plead to keep her a few days, at least ten. But she who had only heard and believed the report has her heart made up, like the Christian toward Christ; "whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not," etc. Brother, mother, house, family, country, speak in vain. And the servant was true to his errand of love, to bring home the bride. It is the very pattern of the Spirit working in the new man and making Christ the all-absorbing object. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The servant is undistracted — has but "one thing" to do. "Hinder me not," he says, "seeing Jehovah hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master." Do any speak of "resignation" to depart? Is it only in His heart to bring us home? His love truly known makes a true love; as here, the simple answer of Rebekah is, "I will go." The Spirit and the bride say but one thing: Come, come, Lord Jesus. Can you say this, beloved brethren? He is coming; wilt thou go? Isaac comes to meet her, and she who had left all behind is "gone out" to meet the bridegroom, veiling herself as not for others, but only for him. As the moment draws near, she realizes it increasingly in spirit.

May God Himself, by His own Spirit, fix upon us the truth of what Christ is to us! Unbelief is always trying to be what it is not; as believers, we never can exaggerate what grace has given us in Him; so blessed with Christ is every saint of God now, though as yet we have but the word and the Spirit of God, and the flesh despises and resists both.

Search God's word and see how far your position consorts with the truth we have before us. A main object in the Epistles of the New Testament is to reveal that which this type shadows in the call of the bride who crosses the desert under the conduct of Eliezer for the bridegroom in Canaan, the church

espoused to Christ.

All that people boast of value and esteem among men, all you may have thought in your system good and helpful, you will find in the light of God's word to be but a hindrance to manifesting Christ — Christ our life. If an object on earth occupies you, it is clearly foreign to the Holy Ghost who is glorifying Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." May you prove that your true business is now to bear testimony to Him as an earth-rejected, heavenly, and returning Christ! I leave this, which is God's truth, not the word of man, to work in your souls. Prove all you have heard about it; hold fast what is good.

On no occasion is the Christian free to forget his proper relationship, and it is as true of the assembly as of the individual. Is it so with you in both respects? If you know what it is to be heavenly in your affections and ways, you will not tolerate an earthly-minded denomination, and indeed a denomination as such, denies the body and bride of Christ as a present reality here below, which demands entire devotedness to Christ and continual waiting for His coming, not of the world, as He is not. A denomination is a voluntary society, or a system framed by worldly authority; neither of which can, in the nature of things, express or even contemplate, the one body of Christ. If we are His, we are so by the Holy Ghost who made us one, as the objects of His love and for His glory, at the same time separating us from the world which crucified Him. "Believest thou this?" May our God bless His own truth for Christ's sake! W. K.