

No Compromise

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“And the servant said unto him, 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? — *Genesis 24:5*

“And the servant said unto him, 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 Lord 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” — *Genesis 24:5-8*.

GENESIS is both the book of beginnings and the book of dispensations. You know what use Paul makes of Sarah and Hagar, of Esau and Jacob, and the like. Genesis is, all through, a book instructing the reader in the dispensations of God towards man. Paul saith, in a certain place, “which things are an allegory,” by which he did not mean that they were not literal facts, but that, being literal facts, they might also be used instructively as an allegory. So may I say of this chapter. It records what actually was said and done; but at the same time, it bears within it allegorical instruction with regard to heavenly things. The true minister of Christ is like this Eleazar of Damascus; he is sent to find a wife for his Master’s son. His great desire is, that many shall be presented unto Christ in the day of his appearing, as the bride, the Lamb’s wife.

The faithful servant of Abraham, before he started, communed with his master; and this is a lesson to us, who go on our Lord’s errands. Let us, before we engage in actual service, see the Master’s face, talk with him, and tell to him any difficulties which occur to our minds. Before we get to work, let us know what we are at, and on what footing we stand. Let us hear from our Lord’s own mouth what he expects us to do, and how far he will help us in the doing of it. I charge you, my fellow-servants, never to go forth to plead with men for God until you have first pleaded with God for men. Do not attempt to deliver a message which you have not first of all yourself received by his Holy Spirit. Come out of the chamber of fellowship with God into the pulpit of ministry among men, and there will be a freshness and a power about you which none shall be able to resist. Abraham’s servant spoke and acted as one who felt bound to do exactly what his master bade him, and to say what his master told him; hence his one anxiety was to know the essence and measure of his commission. During his converse with his master he mentioned one little point about which there might be a hitch; and his master soon removed the difficulty from his mind. It is about that hitch, which has occurred lately on a very large scale, and has upset a good many of my Master’s servants, that I am going to speak this morning: may God grant that it may be to the benefit of his church at large!

I. Beginning our sermon, we will ask you, first, to THINK OF THE SERVANT’S JOYFUL BUT WEIGHTY ERRAND. It was a joyful errand: the bells of marriage were ringing around him. The marriage of the heir should be a joyful event. It was an honourable thing for the servant to be entrusted with the finding of a wife for his master’s son. Yet it was every way a most responsible business, by no means easy of accomplishment. Blunders might very readily occur before he was aware of it; and he needed to have all his wits about him, and something more than his wits, too, for so delicate a matter. He had to journey far, over lands without track or road; he had to seek out a family which he did not know, and to find out of that family a woman whom he did not know, who nevertheless should be the right person to be the wife of his master’s son: all this was a great service.

The work this man undertook was *a business upon which his master's heart was set*. Isaac was now forty years old, and had shown no sign of marrying. He was of a quiet, gentle spirit, and needed a more active spirit to urge him on. The death of Sarah had deprived him of the solace of his life, which he had found in his mother, and had, no doubt, made him desire tender companionship. Abraham himself was old, and well stricken in years; and he very naturally wished to see the promise beginning to be fulfilled, that in Isaac should his seed be called. Therefore, with great anxiety, which is indicated by his making his servant swear an oath of a most solemn kind, he gave him the commission to go to the old family abode in Mesopotamia, and seek for Isaac a bride from thence. Although that family was not all that could be desired, yet it was the best he knew of; and as some heavenly light lingered there, he hoped to find in that place the best wife for his son. The business was, however, a serious one which he committed to his servant. My brethren, this is nothing compared with the weight which hangs on the true minister of Christ. All the Great Father's heart is set on giving to Christ a church which shall be his beloved for ever. Jesus must not be alone: his church must be his dear companion. The Father would find a bride for the great Bridegroom, a recompense for the Redeemer, a solace for the Saviour: therefore he lays it upon all whom he calls to tell out the gospel, that we should seek souls for Jesus, and never rest till hearts are wedded to the Son of God. Oh, for grace to carry out this commission!

This message was the more weighty because of the person for whom the spouse was sought. Isaac was an extraordinary personage; indeed, to the servant he was unique. He was a man born according to promise, not after the flesh, but by the power of God; and you know how in Christ, and in all that are one with Christ, the life comes by the promise and the power of God, and springeth not of man. Isaac was himself the fulfillment of promise, and the heir of the promise. Infinitely glorious is our Lord Jesus as the Son of man! Who shall declare his generation? Where shall be found a helpmeet for him? a soul fit to be espoused unto him? Isaac had been sacrificed; he had been laid upon the altar, and although he did not actually die, his father's hand had unsheathed the knife wherewith to slay him. Abraham in spirit had offered up his son; and you know who he is of whom we preach, and for whom we preach, even Jesus, who has laid down his life a sacrifice for sinners. He has been presented as a whole burnt-offering unto God. Oh! by the wounds, and by the bloody sweat, I ask you where shall we find a heart fit to be wedded to him? How shall we find men and women who can worthily recompense love so amazing, so divine, as that of him who died the death of the cross? Isaac had also been, in a figure, raised from the dead. To his father he was "as good as dead," as said the apostle; and he was given back to him from the dead. But our blessed Lord has actually risen from an actual death, and stands before us this day as the Conqueror of death, and the Spoiler of the grave. Who shall be joined to this Conqueror? Who is fit to dwell in glory with this glorious One? One would have thought that every heart would aspire to such happiness, and leap in prospect of such peerless honour, and that none would shrink back except through a sense of great unworthiness. Alas! it is not so, though so it ought to be.

What a weighty errand have we to fulfil to find those who shall be linked for ever in holy union with the Heir of the promise, even the sacrificed and risen One! Isaac was everything to Abraham. Abraham would have said to Isaac, "All that I have is thine." So is it true of our blessed Lord, whom he hath made Heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds, that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What a dignity will be put upon any of you who are married to Christ! To what a height of eminence will you be uplifted by becoming one with Jesus! O preacher, what a work hast thou to do to-day, to find out those to whom thou shalt give the bracelet, and upon whose face thou shalt hang the jewel! To whom shall I say, "Wilt thou give thy heart to my Lord! Wilt thou have Jesus to be thy confidence, thy salvation, thine all in all? Art thou willing to become his that he may be thine?"

Said I not truly that it was a joyful, but a weighty errand, when you think *what she must be to whom his master's son should be espoused*? She must, at least, be willing and beautiful. In the day of God's power, hearts are made willing. There can be no marriage to Jesus without a heart of love. Where shall we find this willing heart? Only where the grace of God has wrought it. Ah, then, I see how I may find beauty, too, among the sons of men! Marred as our nature is by sin, only the Holy Spirit can impart that beauty of holiness which will enable the Lord Jesus to see comeliness in his chosen. Alas! in our hearts there is an

aversion to Christ, and an unwillingness to accept of him, and at the same time a terrible unfitness and unworthiness! The Spirit of God implants a love which is of heavenly origin, and renews the heart by a regeneration from above; and then we seek to be one with Jesus, but not till then. See, then, how our errand calls for the help of God himself.

Think what she will become who is to be married to Isaac? She is to be his delight; his loving friend and companion. She is to be partner of all his wealth; and specially is she to be a partaker in the great covenant promise, which was peculiarly entailed upon Abraham and his family. When a sinner comes to Christ, what does Christ make of him? His delight is in him: he communes with him; he hears his prayer, he accepts his praise; he works in him and with him, and glorifies himself in him. He makes the believing man joint-heir with himself of all that he has, and introduces him into the covenant treasure-house, wherein the riches and glory of God are stored up for his chosen. Ah, dear friends! it is a very small business in the esteem of some to preach the gospel; and yet, if God is with us, ours is more than angels' service. In a humble way you are telling of Jesus to your boys and girls in your classes; and some will despise you as "only Sunday-school teachers"; but your work has a spiritual weight about it unknown to conclaves of senators, and absent from the counsels of emperors. Upon what you say, death, and hell, and worlds unknown are hanging. You are working out the destinies of immortal spirits, turning souls from ruin to glory, from sin to holiness.

"'Tis not a work of small import

Your loving care demands;

But what might fill an angel's heart,

And filled the Saviour's hands."

In carrying out his commission, *this servant must spare no exertion*. It would be required of him to journey to a great distance, having a general indication of direction, but not knowing the way. He must have divine guidance and protection. When he reached the place, he must exercise great common-sense, and at the same time a trustful dependence upon the goodness and wisdom of God. It would be a wonder of wonders if he ever met the chosen woman, and only the Lord could bring it to pass. He had all the care and the faith required. We have read the story of how he journeyed, and prayed, and pleaded. We should have cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" but we see that the Lord Jehovah made him sufficient, and his mission was happily carried out.

How can we put ourselves into the right position to get at sinners, and win them for Jesus? How can we learn to speak the right words? How shall we suit our teaching to the condition of their hearts? How shall we adapt ourselves to their feelings, their prejudices, their sorrows, and their temptations? Brethren, we who preach the gospel continually may well cry, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." To seek for pearls at the bottom of the sea is child's play compared with seeking for souls in this wicked London. If God be not with us, we may look our eyes out, and wear our tongues away in vain. Only as the Almighty God shall lead, and guide, and influence, and inspire, can we perform our solemn trust; only by divine help shall we joyfully come back, bringing with us the chosen of the Lord. We are the Bridegroom's friends, and we rejoice greatly in his joy, but we sigh and cry till we have found the chosen hearts in whom he will delight, whom he shall raise to sit with him upon his throne.

II. Secondly, I would have you CONSIDER THE REASONABLE FEAR WHICH IS MENTIONED. Abraham's servant said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land." This is a very serious, grave, and common difficulty. If the woman be not willing, nothing can be done; force and fraud are out of the question; there must be a true will, or there can be no marriage in this instance. Here was the difficulty: here was a will to be dealt with. Ah, my brethren! this is our difficulty still. Let me describe this difficulty in detail as it appeared to the servant, and appears to us.

She may not believe my report, or be impressed by it. When I come to her, and tell her that I am sent by Abraham, she may look me in the face, and say, "There be many deceivers nowadays." If I tell her that my

master's son is surpassingly beautiful and rich, and that he would fain take her to himself, she may answer, "Strange tales and romances are common in these days; but the prudent do not quit their homes." Brethren, in our case this is a sad fact. The great evangelical prophet cried of old, "Who hath believed our report?" We also cry in the same words. Men care not for the report of God's great love to the rebellious sons of men. They do not believe that the infinitely glorious Lord is seeking the love of poor, insignificant man, and to win it has laid down his life. Calvary, with its wealth of mercy, grief, love, and merit, is disregarded. Indeed, we tell a wonderful story, and it may well seem too good to be true; but it is sad indeed that the multitude of men go their ways after trifles, and count these grand realities to be but dreams. I am bowed down with dismay that my Lord's great love, which led him even to die for men, should hardly be thought worthy of your hearing, much less of your believing. Here is a heavenly marriage, and right royal nuptials placed within your reach; but with a sneer you turn aside, and prefer the witcheries of sin.

There was another difficulty: *she was expected to feel a love to one she had never seen*. She had only newly heard that there was such a person as Isaac, but yet she must love him enough to leave her kindred, and go to a distant land. This could only be because she recognized the will of Jehovah in the matter. Ah, my dear hearers! all that we tell you is concerning things not seen as yet; and here is our difficulty. You have eyes, and you want to see everything; you have hands, and you want to handle everything; but there is one whom you cannot see as yet, who has won our love because of what we believe concerning him. We can truly say of him, "Whom having not seen, we love: in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I know that you answer our request thus: "You demand too much of us when you ask us to love a Christ we have never seen." I can only answer, "It is even so: we do ask more of you than we expect to receive." Unless God the Holy Ghost shall work a miracle of grace upon your hearts, you will not be persuaded by us to quit your old associations, and join yourselves to our beloved Lord. And yet, if you did come to him, and love him, he would more than content you; for you would find in him rest unto your souls, and a peace which passeth all understanding.

Abraham's servant may have thought: *She may refuse to make so great a change* as to quit Mesopotamia for Canaan. She had been born and bred away there in a settled country, and all her associations were with her father's house; and to marry Isaac she must tear herself away. So, too, you cannot have Jesus, and have the world too: you must break with sin to be joined to Jesus. You must come away from the licentious world, the fashionable world, the scientific world, and from the (so-called) religious world. If you become a Christian, you must quit old habits, old motives, old ambitions, old pleasures, old boasts, old modes of thought. All things must become new. You must leave the things you have loved, and seek many of those things which you have hitherto despised. There must come to you as great a change as if you had died, and were made over again. You answer, "Must I endure all this for One whom I have never seen, and for an inheritance on which I have never set my foot?" It is even so. Although I am grieved that you turn away, I am not in the least surprised, for it is not given to many to see him who is invisible, or to choose the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life. The man or woman who will follow God's messenger to be married to so strange a Bridegroom is a rare bird.

Moreover, it might be a great difficulty to Rebekah, if she had had any difficulties at all, to think that *she must henceforth lead a pilgrim life*. She would quit house and farm for tent and gipsy life. Abraham and Isaac found no city to dwell in, but wandered from place to place, dwelling alone, sojourners with God. Their outward mode of life was typical of the way of faith, by which men live in the world, and are not of it. To all intents and purposes Abraham and Isaac were out of the world, and lived on its surface without lasting connection with it. They were the Lord's men, and the Lord was their possession. He set himself apart for them, and they were set apart for him. Rebekah might well have said, "That will never do for me. I cannot outlaw myself. I cannot quit the comforts of a settled abode to ramble over the fields wherever the flocks may require me to roam."

It does not strike the most of mankind that it would be a good thing to be in the world, and yet not to be of it. They are no strangers in the world, they long to be admitted more fully into its "society." They are not aliens here with their treasures in heaven, they long to have a good round sum on earth, and find their

heaven in enjoying it themselves, and enriching their families. Earthworms as they are, the earth contents them. If any man becomes unworldly, and makes spiritual things his one object, they despise him as a dreamy enthusiast. Many men think that the things of religion are merely meant to be read of, and to be preached about; but that to live for them would be to spend a dreamy, unpractical existence. Yet the spiritual is, after all, the only real: the material is in deepest truth the visionary and unsubstantial. Still, when people turn away because of the hardness of holy warfare, and the spirituality of the believing life, we are not astonished, for we hardly hoped it could be otherwise. Unless the Lord renews the heart, men will always prefer the bird-in-the-hand of this life to the bird-in-the-bush of the life to come.

Moreover, it might be that the woman *might not care for the covenant of promise*. If she had no regard for Jehovah and his revealed will, she was not likely to go with the man, and enter upon marriage with Isaac. He was the Heir of the promises, the inheritor of the covenant privileges which the Lord by oath had promised. His chosen would become the mother of that chosen seed in whom God had ordained to bless the world throughout all the ages, even the Messiah, the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head.

Peradventure the woman might not see the value of the covenant, nor appreciate the glory of the promise. The things we have to preach of, such as life everlasting, union with Christ, resurrection from the dead, reigning with him for ever and ever, seem to the dull hearts of men to be as idle tales. Tell them of a high interest for their money, of large estates to be had for a venture, or of honours to be readily gained, and inventions to be found out, they open all their eyes and their ears, for here is something worth knowing; but the things of God, eternal, immortal, boundless —these are of no importance to them. They could not be induced to go from Ur to Canaan for such trifles as eternal life, and heaven, and God.

So you see our difficulty. Many disbelieve altogether, and others cavil and object. A greater number will not even listen to our story; and of those who do listen, most are careless, and others dally with it, and postpone the serious consideration. Alas! we speak to unwilling ears.

III. In the third place, I would ENLARGE UPON HIS VERY NATURAL SUGGESTION. This prudent steward said, "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?*" "If she will not come to Isaac, shall Isaac go down to her? This is the suggestion of the present hour: if the world will not come to Jesus, shall Jesus tone down his teachings to the world? In other words, if the world will not rise to the church, shall not the church go down to the world? Instead of bidding men to be converted, and come out from among sinners, and be separate from them, let us join with the ungodly world, enter into union with it, and so pervade it with our influence by allowing it to influence us. Let us have a Christian world.

To this end let us revise our doctrines. Some are old-fashioned, grim, severe, unpopular; let us drop them out. Use the old phrases so as to please the obstinately orthodox, but give them new meanings so as to win philosophical infidels, who are prowling around. Pare off the edges of unpleasant truths, and moderate the dogmatic tone of infallible revelation: say that Abraham and Moses made mistakes, and that the books which have been so long had in reverence are full of errors. Undermine the old faith, and bring in the new doubt; for the times are altered, and the spirit of the age suggests the abandonment of everything that is too severely righteous, and too surely of God.

The deceitful adulteration of doctrine is attended by a falsification of experience. Men are now told that they were born good, or were made so by their infant baptism, and so that great sentence, "Ye must be born again," is deprived of its force. Repentance is ignored, faith is a drug in the market as compared with "honest doubt," and mourning for sin and communion with God are dispensed with, to make way for entertainments, and Socialism, and politics of varying shades. A new creature in Christ Jesus is looked upon as a sour invention of bigoted Puritans. It is true, with the same breath they extol Oliver Cromwell; but then 1888 is not 1648. What was good and great three hundred years ago is mere cant to-day. That is what "modern thought" is telling us; and under its guidance all religion is being toned down. Spiritual religion is despised, and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday; behave yourself;

and above all, believe everything except what you read in the Bible, and you will be all right. Be fashionable, and think with those who profess to be scientific—this is the first and great commandment of the modern school; and the second is like unto it—do not be singular, but be as worldly as your neighbours. Thus is Isaac going down into Padan-aram: thus is the church going down to the world.

Men seem to say—It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass. We want a quicker way. To wait till people are born again, and become followers of Christ, is a long process: let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions; that will do: don't trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the gospel, but neither do we. You believe something or other. Come along; if you do not believe anything, no matter; your "honest doubt" is better by far than faith. "But," say you, "nobody talks so." Possibly they do not use the same words, but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion; this is the drift of the times.

I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers, who are treacherously betraying our holy religion under pretence of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the church to the world, and so include a larger area within its bounds. By semi-dramatic performances they make houses of prayer to approximate to the theatre; they turn their services into musical displays, and their sermons into political harangues or philosophical essays—in fact, they exchange the temple for the theatre, and turn the ministers of God into actors, whose business it is to amuse men. Is it not so, that the Lord's-day is becoming more and more a day of recreation or of idleness, and the Lord's house either a joss-house full of idols, or a political club, where there is more enthusiasm for a party than zeal for God? Ah me! the hedges are broken down, the walls are levelled, and to many there is henceforth, no church except as a portion of the world, no God except as an unknowable force by which the laws of nature work.

This, then, is the proposal. In order to win the world, the Lord Jesus must conform himself, his people, and his Word to the world. I will not dwell any longer on so loathsome a proposal.

IV. In the fourth place, NOTICE HIS MASTER'S OUTSPOKEN, BELIEVING REPUDIATION OF THE PROPOSAL. He says, shortly and sharply, "*Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.*" The Lord Jesus Christ heads that grand emigration party which has come right out from the world. Addressing his disciples, he says, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are not of the world by birth, not of the world in life, not of the world in object, not of the world in spirit, not of the world in any respect whatever. Jesus, and those who are in him, constitute a new race. The proposal to go back to the world is abhorrent to our best instincts; yea, deadly to our noblest life. A voice from heaven cries, "Bring not my son thither again." Let not the people whom the Lord brought up out of Egypt return to the house of bondage; but let their children come out, and be separate, and the Lord Jehovah will be a Father unto them.

Notice how Abraham states the question. In effect, he argues it thus: *this would be to forego the divine order.* "For," says Abraham, "the Lord God of heaven took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred." What, then, if he brought Abraham out, is Isaac to return? This cannot be. Hitherto the way of God with his church has been to sever a people from the world to be his elect—a people formed for himself, who shall show forth his praise. Beloved, God's plan is not altered. He will still go on calling those whom he did predestinate. Do not let us fly in the teeth of that fact, and suppose that we can save men on a more wholesale scale by ignoring the distinction between the dead in sin and the living in Zion. If God had meant to bless the family at Padan-aram by letting his chosen ones dwell among them, why did he call Abraham out at all? If Isaac may do good by dwelling there, why did Abraham leave? If there is no need of a separate church now, what have we been at throughout all these ages? Has the martyr's blood been shed out of mere folly? Have confessors and reformers been mad when contending for doctrines which, it would seem, are of no great account? Brethren, there are two seeds—the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent—and the difference will be maintained even to the end; neither must we ignore the distinction to please men.

For Isaac to go down to Nahor's house for a wife *would be placing God second to a wife*. Abraham begins at once with a reference to Jehovah, "the God of heaven"; for Jehovah was everything to him, and to Isaac also. Isaac would never renounce his walk with the living God that he might find a wife. Yet this apostasy is common enough nowadays. Men and women who profess godliness will quit what they profess to believe in order to get richer wives or husbands for themselves or their children. This mercenary conduct is without excuse. "Better society" is the cry—meaning more wealth and fashion. To the true man God is first—yea, all in all; but God is placed at the fag-end, and everything else is put before him by the base professor. In the name of God I call upon you who are faithful to God and to his truth, to stand fast, whatever you lose, and turn not aside, whatever you might gain. Count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We want Abraham's spirit within us, and we shall have that when we have Abraham's faith.

Abraham felt that this would be *to renounce the covenant promise*. See how he puts it: "The God that took me from my father's house sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land." Are they, then, to leave the land, and go back to the place from which the Lord had called them? Brethren, we also are heirs of the promise of things not seen as yet. For the sake of this we walk by faith, and hence we become separate from those around us. We dwell among men as Abraham dwelt among the Canaanites; but we are of a distinct race: we are born with a new birth, live under different laws, and act from different motives. If we go back to the ways of worldlings, and are numbered with them, we have renounced the covenant of our God, the promise is no longer ours, and the eternal heritage is in other hands. Do you not know this? The moment the church says, "I will be as the world," she has doomed herself with the world. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose, then the flood came, and swept them all away. So will it again happen should the world take the church into its arms: then shall come some overwhelming judgment, and, it may be, a deluge of devouring fire. The covenant promise and the covenant heritage are no longer ours if we go down to the world and quit our sojourning with the Lord.

Besides, dear friends, *no good can come of trying to conform to the world*. Suppose the servant's policy could have been adopted, and Isaac had gone down to Nahor's house, what would have been the motive? To spare Rebekah the pain of separating from her friends and the trouble of travelling. If those things could have kept her back, what would she have been worth to Isaac? The test of separation was wholesome, and by no means ought it to be omitted. She is a poor wife who would not take a journey to reach her husband. And all the converts that the church will ever make by softening down its doctrine, and by becoming worldly, will not be worth one bad farthing a gross. When we get them, the next question will be, "How can we get rid of them?" They would be of no earthly use to us. It swelled the number of Israelites when they came out of Egypt that a great number of the lower order of Egyptians came out with them. Yes, but that mixed multitude became the plague of Israel in the wilderness, and we read that "the mixt multitude fell a lusting." The Israelites were bad enough, but it was the mixed multitude that always led the way in murmuring. Why is there such spiritual death to-day? Why is false doctrine so rampant in the churches? It is because we have ungodly people in the church and in the ministry. Eagerness for numbers, and especially eagerness to include respectable people, has adulterated many churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice, and fond of silly amusements. These are the people who despise a prayer-meeting, but rush to see "living waxworks" in their schoolrooms. God save us from converts who are made by lowering the standard, and tarnishing the spiritual glory of the church! No, no; if Isaac is to have a wife worthy of him, she will come away from Laban and the rest, and she will not mind a journey on camel-back. True converts are never daunted by truth or holiness—these, in fact, are the things which charm them.

Besides, Abraham felt that *there could be no reason for taking Isaac down there*, for the Lord would assuredly find him a wife. Abraham said, "He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." Are you afraid that preaching the gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God's way? Is this why you pine for clever oratory? Is this why you must have music, and architecture, and flowers, and millinery? After all, is it by might and by power, and not by the Spirit of God?

It is even so in the opinion of many. Brethren beloved, there are many things which I might allow to other worshippers which I have denied myself in conducting the worship of this congregation. I have long worked out before your very eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes hither to gratify his eye with art, or his ear with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified, and the simplicity of the gospel; yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Sabbath after Sabbath, for five-and-thirty years? I have shown you nothing but the cross, the cross without the flowers of oratory, the cross without the blue lights of superstition or excitement, the cross without diamonds of ecclesiastical rank, the cross without the buttresses of a boastful science. It is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself, and afterwards to eternal life! In this house we have proved successfully, these many years, this great truth, that the gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners, and build up and sustain a church.

We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the gospel still: only let it be the gospel in its purity. This grand old sword will cleave a man's chine, and split a rock in halves. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard of artistic work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard, and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to Hades, and then see how, in the Lord's hands, that glorious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grass with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's own way.

V. And now, fifthly, observe HIS RIGHTEOUS ABSOLUTION OF HIS SERVANT. "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."

When we lie a-dying, if we have faithfully preached the gospel, our conscience will not accuse us for having kept closely to it: we shall not mourn that we did not play the fool or the politician in order to increase our congregation. Oh, no! our Master will give us full absolution, even if few be gathered in, so long as we have been true to him. "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." Do not try the dodges which debase religion. Keep to the simple gospel; and if the people are not converted by it, you will be clear. My dear hearers, how much I long to see you saved! But I would not belie my Lord, even to win your souls, if they could be so won. The true servant of God is responsible for diligence and faithfulness; but he is not responsible for success or non-success. Results are in God's hands. If that dear child in your class is not converted, yet if you have set before him the gospel of Jesus Christ with loving, prayerful earnestness, you shall not be without your reward. If I preach from my very soul the grand truth that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will save my hearers, and if I persuade and entreat them to believe in Jesus unto eternal life; if they will not do so, their blood will lie upon their own heads. When I go back to my Master, if I have faithfully told out his message of free grace and dying love, I shall be clear. I have often prayed that I might be able to say at the last what George Fox could so truly say: "I am clear, I am clear!" It is my highest ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. I have preached God's truth, so far as I know it, and I have not been ashamed of its peculiarities. That I might not stultify my testimony I have cut myself clear of those who err from the faith, and even from those who associate with them.

What more can I do to be honest with you? If, after all, men will not have Christ, and his gospel, and his rule, it is their own concern. If Rebekah had not come to Isaac she would have lost her place in the holy line. My beloved hearer, will you have Jesus Christ or not? He has come into the world to save sinners, and he casts out none. Will you accept him? Will you trust him? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Will you believe him? Will you be baptized into his name? If so, salvation is yours; but if not, he himself hath said it, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Oh, do not expose yourselves to that damnation! Or, if you are set upon it; then, when the great white throne shall be seen in yonder skies, and the day of wrath has

come, do me the justice to acknowledge that I bade you flee to Jesus, and that I did not amuse you with novel theories. I have brought neither flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, nor any other kind of music to please your ears, but I have set Christ crucified before you, and bidden you *believe and live*. If you refuse to accept the substitution of Christ, you have refused your own mercies. Clear me in that day of all complicity with the novel inventions of deluded men. As for my Lord, I pray of him grace to be faithful to the end, both to his truth, and to your souls. Amen.

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