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CHAPTER 14: THE TRIAL AND TRIUMPH OF ABRAHAM

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him,

Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." – GEN. 22:1,2

ABRAHAM made a great profession of religion, as every man will who has any to profess. But Abraham was extraordinarily religious, and he used to say as much. He said he loved God with all his heart, that he had the most boundless confidence in the Divine direction, that all he had was on the altar, that wife, family, goods, life were all given up to the service of God. He used to argue that it was just as sensible and reasonable for him to do everything that God told him in that country where he lived, as it would be when he came to live in Paradise. And he even went so far as to say that no matter what might happen he would be faithful, and that anywhere and everywhere God might reckon on his doing His will as the angels did it in heaven.

This great profession of Abraham's made a great stir. It was talked about in all directions. Some, the open enemies of God, mocked and made sport of it; they said every man had his price, and that somewhere there was a temptation for every man, which if brought face to face with him would be sure to pull him down. In short, they said, Let Abraham only be tried in a tender place, and he will go over, like anyone else.

Others of those who professed to be the friends of God, but who did not believe in extremes, said such faithfulness was impossible; they held that sin – that is, disobedience – was a necessity, No man could reckon on persevering in unswerving loyalty and faithfulness to the end; it was good for people to fall now and then, and it was calculated to deepen their humility to expect it. Moreover, this class specially doubted about Abraham because there were "shadows" on his past life. He had made several ugly slips that had been, might be, nay "they felt certain" would be, again;



therefore they reckoned Abraham's confidence as little short of presumption.

Moreover, God Himself seems to have been in some uncertainty concerning Abraham, not whether he was all he professed at the time, this Jehovah knew full well, but He does seem to have felt some doubt whether there might not be some stress of temptation before which Abraham's supreme affection for Him would: give way.

So Jehovah resolved to settle this controversy for ever, Abraham should be tested. He would Himself" tempt " – that is, try him, and that in such a manner that there should be neither room nor reason for further discussion while the world stood. God effected this by giving Abraham the remarkable command quoted at the head of this paper.

How Abraham received the message, rose up, made the necessary preparations for the journey, and went off the nearest way, pausing not until he reached the place appointed for this sacred tragedy, is not only recorded in the Bible, but is known throughout the whole world. It is also known that in doing this Abraham gave to us one of the most wonderful and effective illustrations of obedience to God recorded on the pages of history. And from this interesting chapter in Abraham's life I want to gather a few practical lessons.

Now this obedience is only another word for the active side of religion; and a very important side it is, and unless it is well understood, and better still, well practised, all the other sides of religion will soon disappear. So let us consider this wonderful exhibition which Abraham here makes of this holy habit, Now before we go any further, we want to make two preliminary observations; we want to make them in the interest of the reader, and as being helpful to his extracting all the honey possible from this lion-hearted exhibition of thought and character.

I. THAT ABRAHAM WAS A MAN SUBJECT TO AND POSSESSED OF LIKE PASSIONS WITH OURSELVES. That is, that he was a man after the fashion of ordinary men, with the same feelings, as a father, husband, and so forth, and that we are not to regard this noble action as the outcome of some altogether exceptional spirit, some iron will or superhuman power possessed by him; but that, being just such an one as ourselves, we may naturally hope to be able, under similar circumstances, to do the



same.

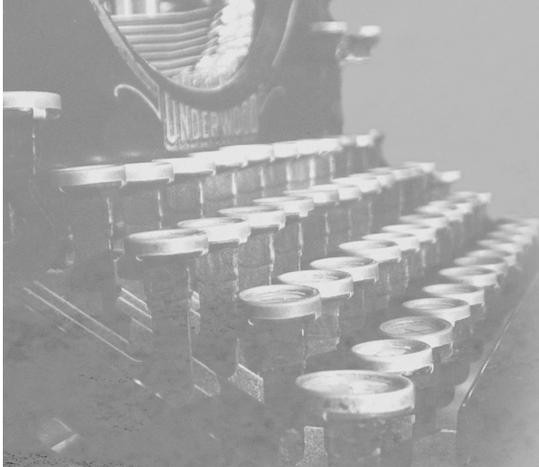
II. THAT GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS IN THE BESTOWMENT OF DIVINE POWER. Therefore that any man may lay claim, and actually receive into himself, as much Divine grace and power as will enable him to acquit himself as manfully before God and man as did Abraham.

Now let us inquire into the statement we have made, that in this incident we have set forth the very essence of Divine obedience. Come along, and we will show how God desires to be obeyed. Perhaps some one may come across these lines who is somewhat concerned about the forms and ceremonies of religion about sacraments, observances, and services – about sacred places and times, and other things. I will show you what is far more important in the estimation of Jehovah, for with Him to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. But enough of the introductory. We remark –

I. THAT IN THIS OBEDIENCE OF ABRAHAM THERE ARE ALL THE QUALITIES OF THAT OBEDIENCE WHICH GOD SEEKS FROM ALL HIS PEOPLE.

1. To begin with, Abraham's obedience was of that kind that stopped at no sacrifices. It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine a more painful duty than the one which God enjoined on the patriarch when He gave him this command. We think we are safe when we defy anyone to imagine any injunction more calculated to fill the heart with anguish than this. Just look at it.

It was against the whole tide of his fatherly affection. Let any of you, fathers or mothers or anyone else who can form any conception of the deep well of love there is in the heart of a father for his boy, try to imagine how you would feel if a similar commandment came to you. Put yourself in Abraham's place. He must take his boy, the son of his old age whom he had nursed up to the dawn of manhood, whom he had loved as he had loved no other child, – he must take this boy Isaac, and with his own hands put him to death, and offer him for a burnt offering. Now mark that, but further –



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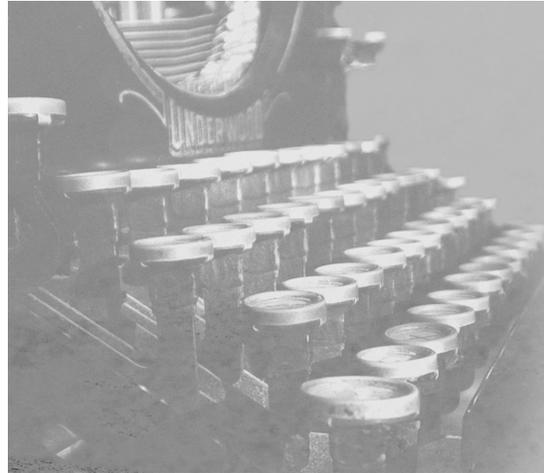
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For Abraham to obey God in this request was the swallowing up, so far as he could judge, of all the joy and gladness of his household. That boy was the chief treasure of his wife. Abraham probably felt that however she might agree with him so far as her will was concerned, it would probably kill her. He was the light and gladness of his tent. What pleasure would there be for him in his table or his hearth or his flocks or his herds or his fields? What would all be without Isaac? A blank. Take all a thousand times told, and spare him Isaac. Take Isaac, and he cares not what becomes of all besides. But God asks for Isaac. Shall he obey?

The death of Isaac was the destruction of all the earthly schemes of ambition which Abraham had cherished. To found a family, live over again in his son and his son's sons to distant generations, had doubtless engaged the old man's attention and hopes for a long time. Isaac was his heir. He had instructed and trained him to this end. All his long-cherished plans centered in him. And now that all seems ripening for the realization of his purpose, this strange command has come, and Isaac must die. Can he comply?

But more than this – for Isaac to die was the death of all the hopes Jehovah had Himself caused Abraham to cherish, that he was to be the founder of a great religious denomination, the father of a vast multitude of the saved sons of Jehovah, who in some wonderful manner should be the means of blessing and saving the world. All this had been growing and expanding in Abraham's soul from and before the birth of the boy, and here and now, in the most sudden, unexpected, and unheard-of manner, every hope and calculation is to be annihilated. Isaac is to die and Abraham is to offer him up himself, and so not only kill Isaac, but put to death all the joy and hope of his existence. And yet Abraham did this. He went through with it.

That was the kind of obedience Abraham gave Jehovah. His was none of your cheap, easy, self-considerate kind of service, that cost him little, consisting mostly of form and ceremony and talk, – service which was great in sentiment and profession of what it would do, but which edged off all the commandments and duties which meant hardship and suffering and loss. God said to Abraham, "Do this," and although it seemed like giving up all the light and joy of existence, yet he did it.



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Oh, listen to this, all ye people, who talk about all the hard things you have to do for God. Come along, my comrades, with the stories of the sacrifices, and presentations, and mobbings, and fightings, and temptations you have to endure in following Jesus Christ.

Look at this old patriarch. Journey with him. Enter into his feelings. Share his anguish. And then stand prepared for the same path of consecration that he trod. God asks the same spirit from everyone of His servants. There is no other way.

To obey God then, as now, meant often, if not always, to disobey men. To please God meant then, as now, to displease yourself and your neighbours and the devil, and to make things very unpleasant all round in a general sort of way. To keep right with God by doing His will was, as now, to get wrong and keep wrong with kindred and friends and fellow-workmen, and many others with whom it is far more pleasant to keep right. Many people spend a lifetime in trying to harmonize the service of God and man, and to please at the same time God and the devil. But it is impossible, my comrades. There are not two standards of service – one a painful one for Abraham, and the other an easy one for you. To obey God you must follow Abraham, and with an obedience that shrinks from no sacrifice.

2. Abraham's obedience was of the kind that went forward independent of all human encouragement. He does not seem to have had a solitary heart to confide in, or to lean upon. It is very improbable that he should have breathed a word to Sarah. He spared her tender soul. It would have possibly been more than a mother's feelings could have endured. And all alone he received the message, all alone he carried the burden of that grief on his heart. Not a word could he whisper to the servant, not a word, above all, could he breathe to Isaac. What a three days in the wilderness it must have been! What an opportunity for the devil. Seldom equalled. Oh, it must have been a terrible ordeal for the grand old Patriarch!

Oh, man's is a clinging nature, always feeling about for other hearts of kindred mould to lean upon. And sympathy, human sympathy, is a very tower of strength. The hurrahs of the bystanders, the cheers of comrades, have carried men many a time through deeds of daring and suffering and sacrifice, far beyond ordinary human strength and



endurance. All this was denied Abraham. Still on he went. He walked the ocean of this agony all alone.

So, more or less, every true man of God has to stand alone.

There are sorrows and questionings, and sometimes very demons in his own breast, and oftentimes outside of it, with which a man has to fight, with no human heart or hand to help him.

3. Abraham exhibited the true spirit of obedience in obeying God straight away. I don't know when he received the message, probably during the night, and the next morning he was away to fulfill the command. Here was no waiting, no begging for time to make preparation. It would have taken some people I know a long, long time to have got ready for such a terrible business. But not so with Abraham; he only needed to know that God wanted his son; and although it was a dreadfully painful trouble to him, he rose early in the morning to obey. Now, my comrades, that is the way to do the will of God; no hanging back, and begging for time, and then being driven up to it with all the reluctance that an ox goes to the slaughter. "Straight away!" is the word, whether you like the business or not. Does God want you to do it? Then hurry up! Make haste to do His will!

4. With Abraham there was no quibbling, and cavilling, about the rightness or wrongness of the command. There is nothing in the narrative to lead us to imagine that he lost any time in arguing the matter over with the Lord. He does not seem to have regarded the matter as being peculiarly mysterious, or waited until Jehovah gave such explanations as satisfied him about the wisdom and profitableness of the course He wished him on this occasion to take. He did not understand the why and wherefore of the matter, of that we may be assured; one thing, and I should think that was the only thing he did understand about the matter, was, that God wanted him to offer Isaac for a burnt offering on Moriah. That was plain enough – sadly too plain, he understood that, and went and did it.

Blind obedience do you call it? Well, perhaps so. It was obedience, and that was what God wanted, and that is all we care for. Let us have obedience, whether sightless or

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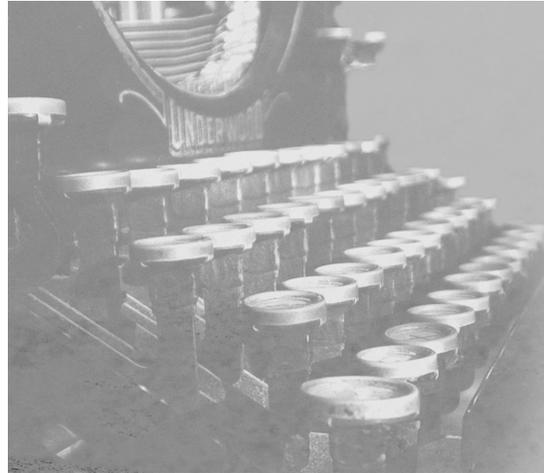
seeing. There is plenty of obedience blind enough to human laws and regulations. Earthly lords, and commanders, and masters exact it with all rigour and strictness, and but for it, in soldiers, and sailors, and workers, and children, in short, in men generally, this world would soon come to a standstill. And yet, in dealing with God, there are multitudes whose attitude seems to say, "I want to know what I shall gain in this, or why should I inconvenience myself by doing that? Until I can understand the atonement and the resurrection and the judgment, I decline to trouble myself to do as God wants me," and, quibbling and waiting for the Almighty to enable them to comprehend the infinite, they stand out against the Divine requirements, and perish.

5. And yet this obedience of Abraham was rendered with the greatest deliberation. It was no mere spasm – a resolution formed overnight, under the pressure of some great excitement, only to be broken on the morrow. There is every evidence that, however exciting might be the feelings and circumstances under which the resolution was formed, it was made with the greatest determination, and adhered to in the coolest manner. Abraham carefully enquired whether this message was from God. Satisfied of that – quite sure – to his practical mind, what was there left for him to do but to set about the work?

So with truly obedient souls. Satisfied as to the course enjoined by God and duty, and the happiness of those about them, what do they want to know further? Their very next business is to obey. If, my comrades, you are not satisfied as to the call of Jehovah – not sure what He wants you to do in the matter – go and deliberate, consider, enquire, pray, but, when the light has come, and you see clearly the Divine will and the guiding hand, cease enquiring – the time for asking questions has gone by, and the hour of action has arrived. Away to your post. If you are bid to Moriah, go there, by the nearest path, and God help you, as He will help you, all the way, and, when you arrive, there may be for you what there was for Abraham, an equally agreeable surprise.

6. The obedience that Abraham manifested here was thorough.

Having put his hand to this plough – painful, and bloody, and agonising as it was, and bid fair to continue to be – he looked not behind him. Having begun the business, he



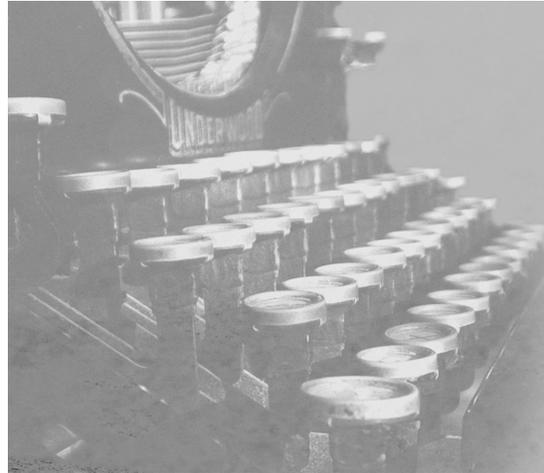
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went through with it, step by step, day by day. The nearer he came to Moriah, the firmer his resolution became. At last, the mount was reached, and the hour came, and the terrible act had to be performed, and now every feeling in his nature rises up against his compliance.

Some people imagine, or seem to imagine, that, by some sort of conjuring or spiritual magic, all that was painful was extracted from the sacrifices and losses these old worthies endured in obeying God, that, although the fire burnt sharp, it did not hurt. It is all a mistake – a foolish mistake. It was just as sorrowful and painful for Abraham to do this, that we have been describing, as it would have been for any father who reads this, and just as difficult. But God had said it must be done, and now that the moment has come, we may well enquire, will he flinch? Will he go through with it? Oh, yes! his heart is strong as ever, and he holds not back his sword from blood. Isaac is offered! God saw it, stayed the descending arm and the gleaming knife, and accepted the will for the deed. Isaac was offered, and yet Isaac was saved.

Oh! my comrades, come and meditate here. Do you see here the image of your own character? Is this your method of consecration and service? Is this the kind of obedience you make manifest in your daily lives? Do you go through with this Isaac-killing business after this fashion? Is this the way you offer up your love of ease, and society, and gain, and pleasure, things allowable, and things forbidden? and having been once convinced as to what the Lord requires, in spite of the pleadings of nature and family, and respectability, and friendship, and everything else, do you go through with it? Or are you among those of whom there are so many within the range of our own acquaintance, who are always coming to Moriah, who seem to spend the larger part of their lifetime in taking Isaac there, and bringing him again. They receive the command, feel its importance with tears and groans, and earnestness, resolve to obey – go through the inward agony of condemning the boy to die, pack up, travel off with him, reach the Mount, rear the altar, and even bind the lad, and then their hearts fail them; it is too much – they can't – they dare not – shed blood. Anyhow, not then, and Isaac is unbound, and they go back again to the place from whence they came – the place of doubt, and fear, and uncertainty, and we are afraid often of godlessness, for does not God depart from such people?



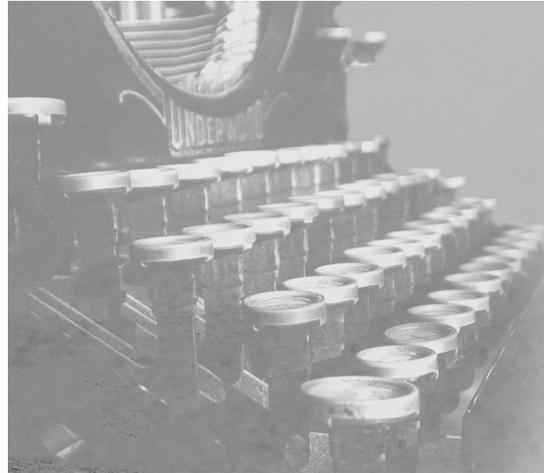
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Not so Abraham! Not so his true followers – his believing children. We are amongst those who not only believe, but obey; and, having begun, we go through with it, knowing that that man must be cursed in himself, and in the eyes of his fellows, and in the eyes of Jehovah, who, having begun to build, is not able to finish on account of his conferring with flesh and blood, and, verily, God has said – "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

II. WE WANT NOW TO CONSIDER THE SECRET OF ABRAHAM'S ABILITY TO OBEY. How came it about, this blood and iron kind of service – this unflinching and unswerving discharge of duty? It is much admired everywhere. Oh, we do love the faithful spirit – the "die-at-your-post men and women" – but, alas! how scarce they are, and what a pity they are so, seeing they are so much wanted. People who have no courage for the hour of danger, no backbone, no capacity for standing alone, who dare not suffer, are of little or no use in this world. Soldiers who yield and run when the balls are flying, and their comrades are wounded, are no good; sailors who tremble and hide when the hurricane sweeps, and the masts snap, and the vessel leaks, are no good; and saints who have no courage for the hour of danger, who fly when the enemy comes in sight, are no good either. We want people who can go through with things, no matter who, or what, comes in the way, who can LITERALLY offer up the love of father and mother, and houses, and land, and ease, ay! and life itself, who can put all on the altar, and stay and see it burn to ashes, if it comes between them and duty. Well may we inquire, where is the secret of it all? What is it makes these Abrahamic people? Let us see!

First, ABRAHAM BELIEVED IN GOD. God was a reality to him, not a name, or a principle, or a good influence somewhere, but a living, almighty person, who spoke, and acted, and lived all about him, and had real power, and real love, and real hatred, a positive actual God. Abraham said so, thought so, was sure of it. That God was his Creator, Proprietor, Redeemer, and Judge, and if God really was the Maker of Isaac, if he owned and sustained him; then, surely, He had a right to his own, and when God told him to take him to Moriah, he took him there. What a hypocrite he would have been to have been pretending all this, professing, and singing, and praying about being a fully consecrated man, two or three times a week or more, and not really believing it all the time; or what a rebel he would have been if, believing it all, he had



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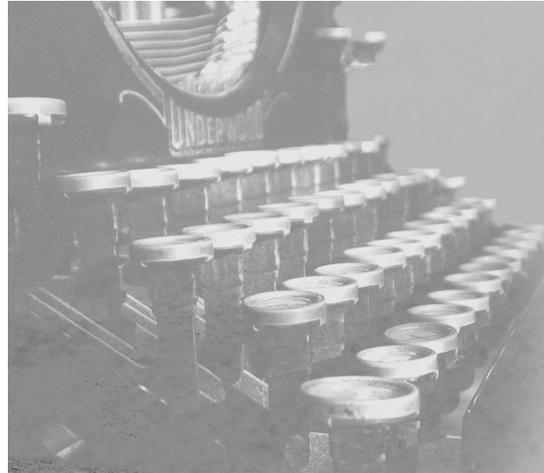
refused to obey, just because it was an unpleasant and painful duty on which God set him.

But he believed in God – all He said – all the time. God had realized Himself in Abraham's soul, and given His own Spirit to dwell there, making Abraham sure of the fact; and once assured of God, and such a God, this obedience became easy and natural. People are awfully down on men who say they are Atheists with their lips, while any number can be practical Atheists, anywhere and everywhere, without rebuke, so that they don't make any talk about it. Go and get sure about God, and then you will have no difficulty in obeying Him – while you are in doubt concerning such a being, no wonder that you are too weak to run in the way of His commandments. Talk about being frightened into obedience by punishments, by the fear of Hell; only get a proper idea of God, and you will be frightened enough of disobeying so great, and powerful, and holy a Being.

2. THE SECOND PART OF THE SECRET OF ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE IS FOUND IN THE FACT THAT HE LOVED GOD. The revelation Abraham had was a very imperfect one in many respects; very imperfect compared with ours; that is, so far as books go. He knew but little of the history of God's dealings with other souls, compared with what we do; but God had so sufficiently and directly revealed Himself to Abraham, as to create in his soul a very passion of affection for Him. He had shown Himself so good, and wise, and loving a being, that all Abraham's heart went out after Him – he loved God.

Do you want to gauge Abraham's love? Come along! bring your measuring line. Now, then, measure his love for Isaac, and Sarah, and home, and earthly greatness. Measure all, and when you have taken it all in, then remember that Abraham offered, without hesitation, all this to please Jehovah. Oh! how he loved Him! What will not love do? It was painful but easy for Abraham to give all up. He loved God so much, that he gave Him all his other loves, only loving them in Him. He had offered his Isaac, and all else, before to Jehovah, and so it was easy to offer him now.

3. ANOTHER SECRET OF THIS ACTION OF ABRAHAM'S WAS THAT HE KNEW THAT HE WAS OBEYING GOD. He had the command direct from Him. He heard His voice, it



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was not a thing done in any haphazard speculative sort of way – all in the darkness of spiritual uncertainty, sometimes thinking he was acting in obedience to the voice of man, and sometimes his own voice. He knew God had spoken, and this made it comparatively easy for him to obey.

How, when, and where he heard this voice, I don't know; perhaps it was an angel brought the message, or it might have been some hieroglyphic written communication, or it might have been a vision – God appearing, as was His wont in those days, in some earthly form, and speaking to him as a man does to his friends. Or it might have been in the depths of his inmost soul, that God made him feel the command. Anyhow, Abraham thought, and felt, and knew, indeed he was certain, that it was a message from God – God, the great God, whom he loved, who could not err, whose bidding might be beyond his comprehension, but who could not possibly tell him to do what was wrong. God bade him do this, and is it to be wondered at that he went and did it?

Now, my brethren, do you hear the voice of God in some form or other? Does He speak to you, so that you know it is He calling you forward in the path of duty and sacrifice, consecration and service? That it is a Divine commission you have. If you are in any doubt, as to whether God positively is directing, and leading, and guiding you, no wonder you are so much at sea, with regard to the things you try to do for Him. If ALL the authority you have in your soul for obedience is man-made, or is drawn from what you know other souls have rendered to Him, or from the lips of those who speak to you in His name, or even from that Holy Book itself, no wonder your sense of responsibility should be weak, and the driving wheel of your will should drag heavily in the direction of service and sacrifice. You will never go beyond the merely human, unless you have the supernatural in command. Your soul must hear, and know it hears, the voice of God Himself continually saying, "Thus saith the Lord;" and then your soul shall shake itself free from all the fears, fashions, and doubts which have possessed it, and, in the face of all possible difficulties and devils, offer a service as mighty as that which Abraham offered. Men – were they priests or anything else – might have thundered in his ears till doomsday, "Offer up Isaac!" They might have assured him till they were blue in the face, that they had a message from God that it was to be done, but they would have urged and exhorted in vain. God Himself must speak in



Abraham's soul, and then Abraham rises up in a hurry to obey.

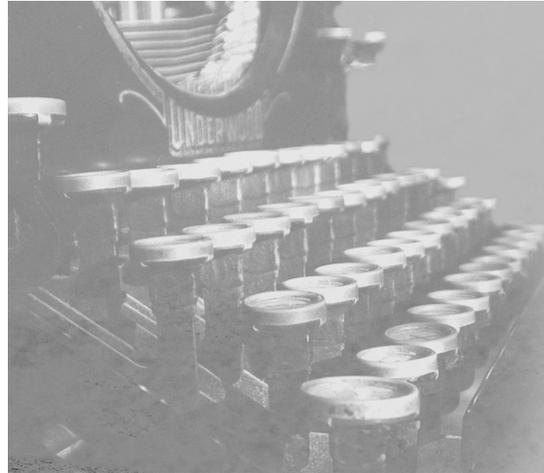
But there are some further elements in this secret of Abraham's obedience.

4. IN ABRAHAM'S SOUL THERE WAS DIVINE POWER. It was not enough for God to express His wishes to Abraham, but he must actually and positively, by His own Spirit, impart to Abraham's soul the power to trample on the human within him, and to obey this command. There was a putting forth in Abraham of the natural, human resolution. He wanted to obey God. He said he would obey God. He rose up and actually went forth to obey God, and with the putting forth of this resolution, and the acting as if he had the power to obey – that is reckoning and relying on God to give him power – there came forth from God that gracious ability, that supernatural strength, that enabled him to render this act of obedience, which will make him the pattern of the faithful down to the end of time.

5. ONE MORE ELEMENT IN THIS OBEDIENCE WAS, THAT HE OBEYED SHARP – that is, he went straight off and did it. That was, in all human probability, his only chance. If he had tarried, and argued, and postponed, and conferred with flesh and blood, the probability is he would have been worsted and defeated – some excuses would have been found, and Isaac would never have been offered. But no! He went off promptly to obey.

He did not wait for pleasant feelings, as many do; he just went off with his heart torn and bleeding as it was, to do as he was told.

He did not wait to consult any wise, religious people, any one specially advanced and experienced. We have no reason to suppose that he mentioned the matter to a soul. The probability is that, had he done so, he would have been persuaded off it. Had he felt led to lay the matter before some body of elders, or before a committee of management; or had he sought the advice and blessing of some church meeting, he would have had such a revelation of the difficulties connected with the course proposed that he would never have gone to Moriah at all, No! he knew the mind of God on the matter, and that was enough for him.



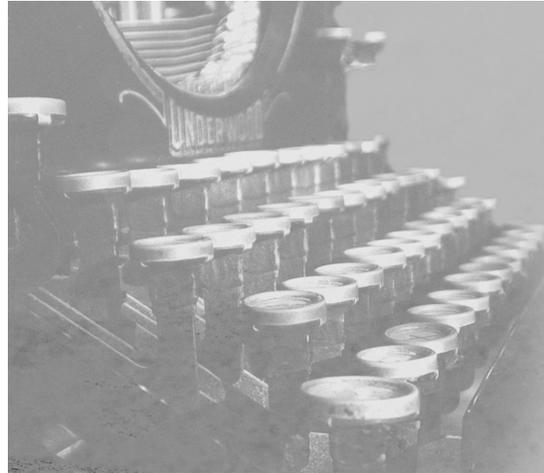
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Just so with you, my comrades, and every one else, as far as that goes; if you want to do right, on pleasant or unpleasant lines, go straight at it; get satisfied as to what you ought to do, and then give up deliberating. Cease weighing the matter over, getting the advice of good, timid people, and at once commit yourself, in the most emphatic and public manner possible, to the doing of the thing. This is your only chance, and if you don't act in this way ten to one if you act in the right way at all.

Oh! what hosts of people there are who are continually coming up to sacrifice, and consecration, and service, and they know what the great God wants from them, and they don't get any further. They believe it is very good. They believe in God. They love Him very much. They want His blessing so that they may be the means of life and salvation to multitudes. They would like that, they would like it very much, but there is some duty – some Isaac to be offered – some work to be done. They get the message from God concerning this duty. They know it is from God; they see they ought to obey – they want to obey – they make up their minds to obey, cost them what it may, BUT THEY WON'T DO IT JUST THEN. The subject must be attended to – thought upon, but they don't want to act hastily. The devil says, Don't act hastily, the matter will keep a day or two; and so it does, and when the day or two is past, they see less reason for haste; and less reason for the sacrifice, and less and less until the whole thing is indefinitely postponed. In other words, God tells them to offer Isaac. They perceive that they ought to offer him. Heaven, and earth, and hell say, Offer him; but they refuse obedience; it is right to make the offering, and they intend fully to make it, but there are many satisfactory reasons why it cannot be done just NOW. What does Jehovah care about their reasons? What He wants is not reasons, but obedience. If you feel you ought to do a thing, don't reason, don't wait, but do it, and DO IT SHARP. Oh, my comrades, again I say what I have said before – when you see your duty, that is the moment for action. Don't let that moment slip, and so miss the power of it, for, perchance, you will never be as strong again. It is high water in your soul. Float off on the flood for action. While you hear God saying, "Take now thy son," take him NOW, and God will assuredly go with you; but if you say, "I will take him some other time," it is ten to one that you will never take him at all. Now then, –

III. WHAT CAME OF THIS OBEDIENCE OF ABRAHAM? What were the results? Were there any that justified the message and the deed? We think there were.



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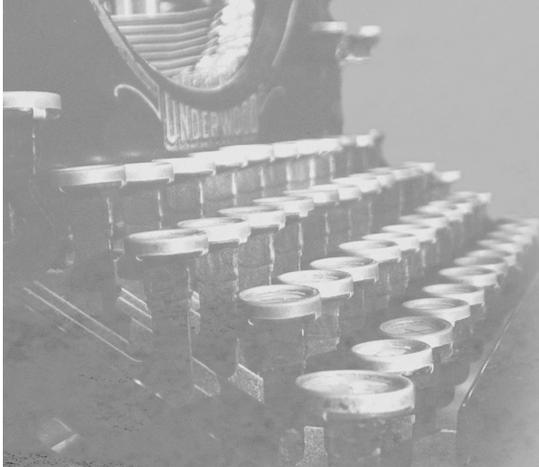
And, first, ABRAHAM HEREBY PROVED THAT HIS RELIGION WAS A REALITY. He was no make-believe servant, who would not serve, but a loyal out-and-out man of God, good and sound to the core, regenerated – indeed, made anew – made good, and, therefore, capable of doing good. If anyone says he was not, I take my stand alongside him on Mount Moriah, with knife in hand and eyes lifted up to heaven, and Isaac bound helpless on the altar, and say, "If this scene does not prove that Abraham was loyal, through and through, neither to be bought nor affrighted, then nothing can be proved."

He satisfied himself. I don't know how far he had been confident before this occasion about the loyalty of his own soul to God, come what might. He might have been saved from doubts before this, but, one thing I do know, he believed in himself after Moriah, not in his own merit or his own strength, but he believed in the integrity of his own renewed, regenerated heart. Satan never tempted him any more about his being a hypocrite. This settled even the devil on that score.

He satisfied his neighbors. If there were any who used to mutter, and grumble, and sneak about, whispering in anyone's ears, who would listen, that Abraham's religion was all a form, or done because it paid, or for any other worldly, fleshly consideration, this incident, when it got out, shut them up once and for ever; their backbiting business came to a stand, so far as Abraham was concerned. Their lying slanders came to an end, because no one could be found to listen to them. Whatever opinions were formed as to Abraham's religion, there was only one as to his reality. They might fall back upon doubts as to his sanity; but there could be none as to his sincerity. He might be a fanatic, or a fool, or something else, but he had proved once and for ever that he was all he professed, and ever so much more.

Abraham satisfied posterity. I am satisfied anyhow, and I have hard work to believe in the sincerity of any man who reads this narrative, who is not satisfied also, that Abraham was a grand, majestic saint, whose love and service did honour to the Lord whom he served.

Abraham satisfied Jehovah. In whatever form God had doubted Abraham, as He watched him build the altar, prepare the wood, bind the lad, and lay him thereon, and



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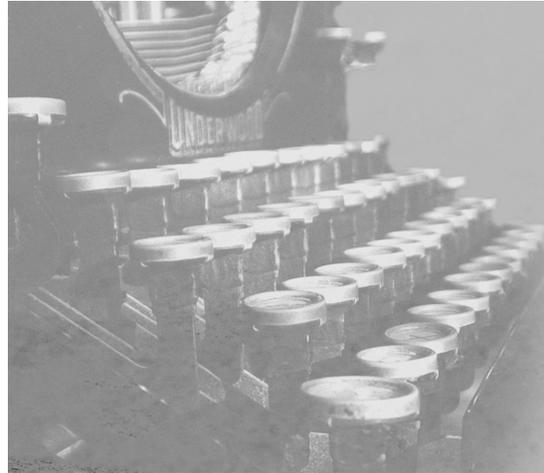
SALVATION SOLDIERY

then lift up the knife to strike the fatal blow, He doubted him no more. Then He spoke and said, – "I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son, from Me." God was satisfied of Abraham's loyalty, and told him so. What a blessed assurance that was to Abraham, and, to the music of that declaration, Abraham marched back home again.

And as that was a pleasant declaration to Abraham, it is no less agreeable to other hearts to have the testimony that they please God. For a man to be able to say of himself and to himself, with his own voice, in all sincerity and truth before the Lord, "I know in Whom I believe, I am all I profess, I fight a good fight, I keep the faith, I love and fear God," is very precious indeed. For a man to hear his family, and neighbours, and friends, unitedly testify to his uprightness, and honour, and sincerity, is very agreeable, but for a man to hear the voice of Jehovah sounding in the depths of his heart, "I KNOW that thou fearest Me," must be, nay is, the most blessed bliss-creating music to be heard in the earth beneath, or in the heavens above. Abraham had this music – Jehovah purified him and purged him as gold and silver, and he offered unto the Lord then, and ever after, the offering of a life of righteousness. And he knew it. My comrades, God told him it was so. And you may have the same holy, consecrated life, and have the same Divine Witnesser to the fact.

2. WE ARE HERE FURNISHED WITH EVIDENCE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF DOING ALL GOD REQUIRES FROM US. Abraham had a hard task. We have seen that it was difficult to imagine a more difficult one, one more impossible to flesh and blood. But he did it. Went through it victoriously, to the declared satisfaction of the Lawgiver.

On the one hand we stand amazed, verily staggered at the length and breadth of the requirement God made on the patriarch when He said, "Give me Isaac." On the other hand, we are equally amazed and staggered at the power exhibited in Abraham when he rose up to the full level of the Divine requirement, and said, "My Lord, here he is." Would you exalt the law, my brother, would you magnify it? Would you set forth to the utmost what it claims? Very good. Excellent, indeed! But allow me, at the same time, to exalt the Gospel, and to do something, at least, towards setting forth the length and breadth of that uttermost sufficient supply of spiritual ability purchased by Jesus Christ and placed at the service of every faithful servant of God.



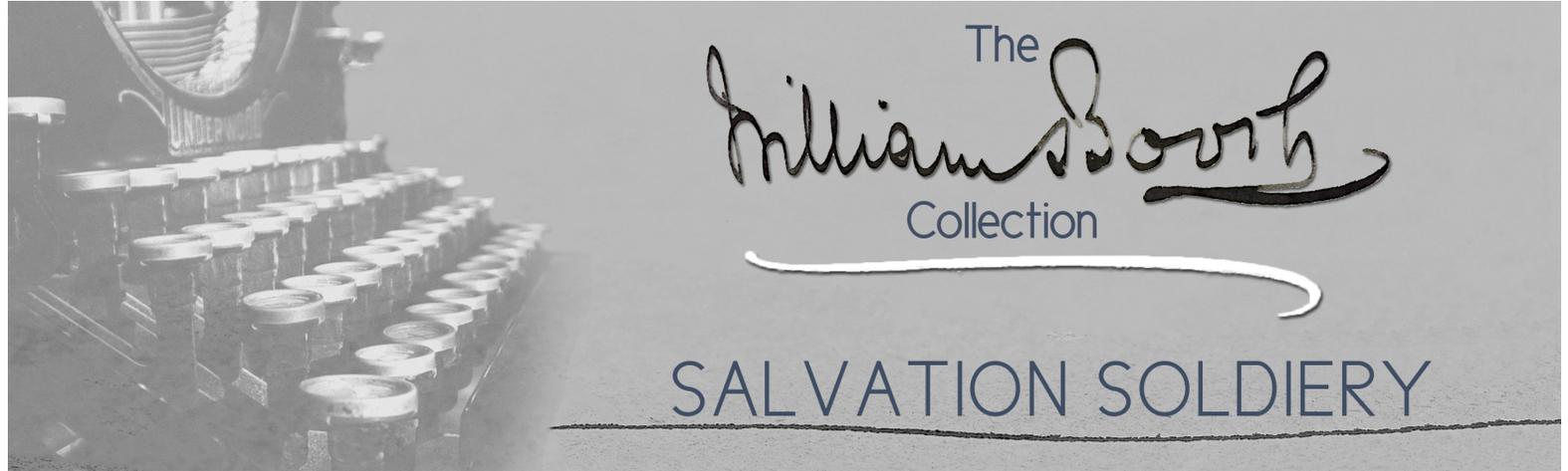
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Some people seem to delight in the failures, and weaknesses, and shortcomings of the saints. They read their Bibles and hunt through their Christian circles for breakdowns, and backsliders, and then set them up as the true standard of religious attainment, and argue that because these have failed, therefore everybody else must do the same. I reject this method, and glory in Abraham. He was properly saved, and sanctified, and consecrated, and filled with the Spirit of power which made him the master of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And, if for Abraham there was this victorious grace, why not for you, dear reader? Is God no respecter of persons, again we ask? verily, then, with every command you receive from the Master, there is also sufficient ability to enable you to obey!

Talk no longer of the hard things God asks you to give up or to do. If He asks impossibilities at your hands, only be sure He asks them, and then rise up – rise up early – and you shall have strength to obey, for "all things are possible to him that believeth." Abraham had this grace, and proved it all-conquering, more than sufficient, for it made him more than conqueror; and, my comrades, notwithstanding all that men or devils may hint or say, there is the same conquering, overcoming, fulfilling, devil-mastering, God-satisfying grace for every believing child of Abraham. If you have not got it, seek it, have it, use it, and you will be like Abraham, an encouragement to all about you, a credit to your profession, a blessing to mankind, and an honour to God!

3· ANOTHER RESULT WE SEE FLOWING FROM THIS OBEDIENCE OF ABRAHAM WAS THAT GOD GAVE HIM BACK THE VERY ISAAC THAT HE OFFERED. That was a moment of intense interest, when the period arrived for the actual performance of this terribly painful act. Now angels and devils came nearer, and God Himself came nearest of all. Would Abraham flinch when the agonising moment arrived? See him, he has reached the foot of the mountain; with slow but firm and steady steps he ascends. Deliberately he builds the altar, lays the wood, and binds the unresisting boy, who seems to share the courage and devotion of his father. And now he lifts the lad! oh, precious burden! imprints a fond, farewell kiss upon his brow, and with an inward groan of anguish, that almost breaks his heart, lays him on the wood; and, lifting up eyes and knife to heaven, he prepares to consummate the sacrifice. In his own soul it is already done. There, the sacrifice is complete. Jehovah saw it so, and,



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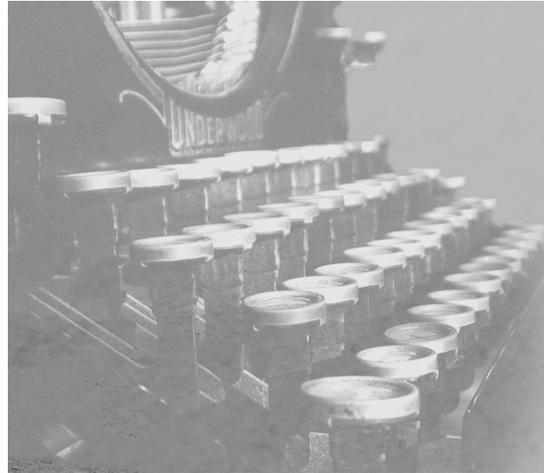
from the overhanging heavens, he made, therefore, the most agreeable surprise that perhaps ever came to the heart of living man. He bade him stay his hand, and take the boy, all warm and living, to his heart, and home again. The name Isaac signifies laughter. The Patriarch had given the laughter, the joy and gladness of his life to God. God saw it, accepted the gift, and then gave the treasure back again. ABRAHAM PLEASED GOD, AND HAD ISAAC AS WELL.

Even so, my brethren, there is with every faithful consecrating soul an exact proportion between what YOU give to God, and what God gives to you – not only in measure, but in kind. The Master's words give no uncertain sound on this subject – "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life " (Mark 10:29, 30).

Abraham gave all his earthly joy, and much as he gave, he received a hundredfold of laughter and gladness as the result of the offering. I don't know how he got home and told the story to Sarah. I don't know how many fatted calves they killed, or how much music and dancing there was, or how long the revels lasted, but I do know that Isaac was as one raised from the dead to father and mother ever afterwards. Abraham emptied house and heart of laughter for the Lord, and Jehovah filled house and heart up again, and that pressed down, and running over.

But is it always thus? Does God uniformly give back the same Isaac we present? If we give father or mother, husband or wife, houses or land, will father or mother, husband or wife, houses or land be returned back again? No! not always. Although this very thing will happen far oftener than most are prepared to believe, or expect. But if the very Isaac, the very things given to God, are not given back, the God of all faithfulness will nevertheless give back into the hearts of faithful consecrating souls, the laughter and gladness, the peace and satisfaction, the human earthly joy, which without Him neither father nor mother, husband nor wife, houses nor land, nor aught else, can possibly bring. So come along, comrades and friends, and make the offering.

4. ABRAHAM ON MOUNT MORIAH SET FORTH TO HIMSELF AND HIS AGE AND TO



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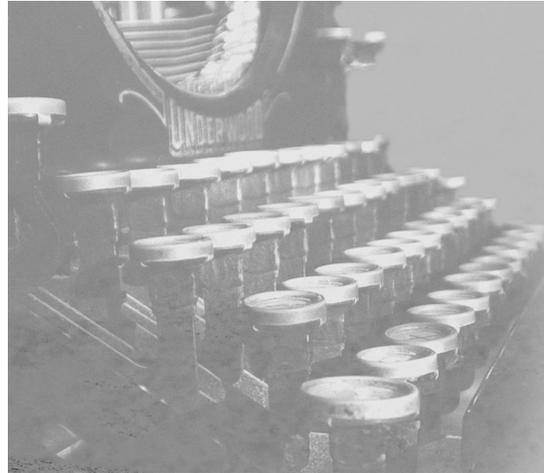
SALVATION SOLDIERY

POSTERITY THE SACRIFICE OFFERED ON CALVARY JUST 2,000 YEARS AFTERWARDS. This act of Abraham was a type of that. As Abraham gave Isaac to please God, so God gave His Son, His only and well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, to save and please the world. All unconsciously Abraham did this, but, nevertheless, it was so. But we, my comrades, are invited to the conscious imitation of God, we have the privilege and the command to be followers of God as dear children. We can imitate God, in not only giving up those dear to us for the sake of the souls, the precious souls of the people; but we can give up ourselves as Jesus did Himself to save a world from endless woe. Oh! like Abraham let us be willing.

5. THE LAST RESULT WE NOTICE IS, THAT THIS ACT OF SUPREME OBEDIENCE TO GOD ENSURED THE DIVINE BLESSING IN ALL ITS FULNESS, AND THE MULTIPLICATION OF POWER FOR USEFULNESS.

"And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, 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; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:15-18).

God blessed him all over, heart, family, and home. He made his joy and gladness abound, and his peace flow like a river. He made him a "real old hallelujah man." "In blessing I will bless thee." When a Queen says to one of her subjects, "I will bless thee," it means something; when a father promises to bless his son, it means something; when a mother clasps her babe to her bosom and says to her darling, "I will bless thee," according to the ability of that mother the declaration means something; and when God the Almighty, All-loving Jehovah says to Abraham, or anyone else, "He will bless," that means a great deal. If He blesses, who can curse? Oh, my comrades! those who follow Abraham in consecration; share to the uttermost the blessing which follows, Jehovah guides them, with His eye supplies all their need, makes all their enemies at peace with them, never leaves nor forsakes them. He gives them a crown of life, and is their portion for ever. Blessing He blesses them.



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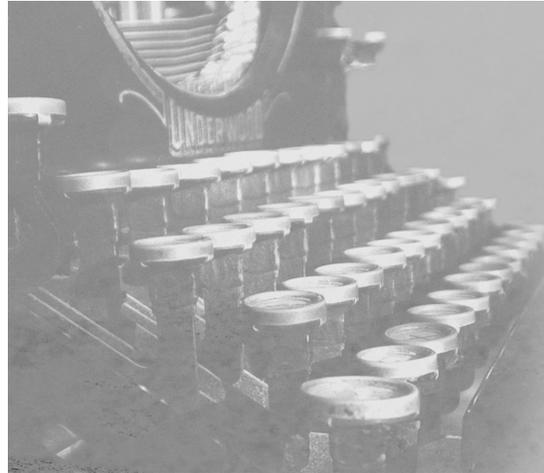
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But God also renewed His promise to Abraham of the multiplication of his seed; and the formation of his posterity into a mighty kingdom. This promise had been given before, but it seems as though it had been conditional then on the full consecration which Abraham made on this occasion. The probability being, that had Abraham failed in this trial, the privilege would have passed over to some one else. But Abraham was faithful to the opportunity, and God was faithful too. He multiplied his seed, gave him children, more children, more children still. He gave him grandchildren, more and more grandchildren, He gave him great grandchildren, and more and more great grandchildren, and still more and more and more until his posterity were as the stars in the firmament, and the sand on the sea-shore for multitude. This promise did not merely refer to his fleshly offspring, but to his spiritual seed – for are not all who are adopted by faith into the family of God the children of Abraham? Most decidedly they are! Think of this! What a multitude! I am one. All you real SALVATION ARMY SOLDIERS are his sons and daughters. What a mighty multitude there is increasing every day on earth and in heaven.

So, my comrades, Moriah and consecration – such consecration as Abraham made there leads to the enduement of spiritual power and to the multiplication of spiritual children.

Go to Moriah then, and you shall have a Pentecost, a holy baptism of blessing, and then shall follow fruitfulness, thousands born for God and heaven. Children, more and more, and yet more children. Grandchildren, and more and more grandchildren, multitudes – KINGDOMS, NATIONS. Come to Moriah, come as Abraham came, as sacrificingly, as promptly, as thoroughly, and as confidingly, and you shall have the same acceptance and assurance and gladness. You shall have the same fulness of personal blessing, and the same increase of divine power to multiply the children of the Lord. BLESSING, HE WILL BLESS YOU, He will make you the fathers and mothers of nations, and kingdoms, peoples, and tongues, and if there come a multitude of you to Moriah, then shall there be a multitude of Abrahams, and from this multitude of Abrahams shall there come forth a redeemed and regenerated world.

A PARENT'S SACRIFICE.



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Fathers and mothers, are you willing to let your children go for God's glory and the salvation of souls? How often when my eyes fall upon some noble lad, some charming girl, who might be made a blessing to thousands, and I ask the question, "Who is that?" does the answer come back, "Oh, a true-blooded soldier, but his or her father or mother is not willing to let him or her go – so we must wait," that is, God must wait – poor sinners must wait, must perish till the time of parental control is ended, till parents have lost the glorious opportunity to do their share in making the surrender.

And yet these very fathers and mothers will profess all the time to be true to God and to be most anxious for the welfare of the children whose service they hold back from their rightful Lord. If it were any question of "a good match," or a good position in life, they would be willing enough to let their children go. But for Him who gave up His only Son for them, oh no! they do not see that they are really called upon to go so far as that.