

SEEKING A WIFE FOR ISAAC

Genesis 24:1-20

Abraham had grown old. He knew that his life was drawing to a close, and that the future lay with his son. His own work and witness were finished. The Lord had blessed him in a wonderful way through life. Even during his sojourning and pilgrimage he had been abundantly blessed. All of this was but a foretaste of eternal blessing to come.

In a similar way, when the Saviour had finished His work on earth, and He was about to return to the Father, He commissioned His disciples to carry on the work of evangelization on earth.

There is scarcely anything more beautiful and inspiring than the calm, bright and peaceful close of a long and honored life. Like a summer sunset, it floods the whole scene with brightness and glory. "The hoary head is a crown of glory" as it sinks to rest after a life's long day spent "in the way of righteousness." So it was with Abraham.

Abraham's was an old age happily spent in continued enjoyment of the divine blessing. The statement, "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things," summarized the whole of Abraham's life and experiences, and in old age he was still rejoicing in the consciousness of God's presence and favor.

His was an old age marked by persistent faithfulness to the divine will. Abraham still clings with undiminished faith and persistence to the revelation of God concerning him and his seed. He is therefore urgent that his son should not take a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites. The commission which he now gives to his trusted servant shows clearly that he desires and determines to follow closely the divine will.

For the important mission of seeking a bride for his son, Isaac, Abraham chose the most responsible representative that he could find. This servant had one business. He did not go into another country to improve it, to engage in politics, to reform the place, but to get a young woman to come out of that country and follow him, and if she followed him he would lead her to the one she accepted to be her husband. This servant's one business was to get a bride for Isaac. He was commissioned with that alone.

Our Lord looks for a similar trust and responsibility in us. We can only measure up to our responsibility by dependence on Him and by abiding so close to Him that we readily know His will. We must have His interests closely at heart, as this servant had the interests of his master at heart. The infinite resources of our Lord are placed at our disposal to use in His service.

The servant of God, before being sent out on his evangelistic mission in the world, enters into covenant-relationship with his Master and is called upon to devote himself utterly to His interests. We ourselves too often forget this and seek to render half-hearted service, which cannot be acceptable to God.

Abraham knew with Whom he had to deal. All the forces of heaven and earth are at the disposal of God as instruments for carrying out His purpose. There were two courses which were forbidden by Abraham. The first was that his servant could not select a wife for Isaac who was a Canaanite. He required complete separation between those in covenant relationship with God and the heathen around them. This presents a principle which holds good today. We are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, but are to come out from among them and be separate.

Wanting to know what was to be done under certain contingencies that might present themselves, the servant said, "Peradventure the woman shall not be willing to follow me unto

this land." He naturally wanted to know what should be done if the woman was unwilling to take the long journey into Canaan. Abraham promptly and briefly replied that in any event his son was not to be taken out of Canaan. This was the second course which he forbade his servant to take. He made it perfectly clear that God's will must be done and His purpose maintained. Going back to the old life was not to be permitted. The pilgrim life was not to be abandoned. God always welcomes inquiries from His servants concerning His will. On being assured by his master of the divine guidance he at once pledged himself to Abraham, and took a solemn oath of faithfulness to duty.

In depending upon God Abraham relied upon God's actions in the past and His promises for the future. He relied on the fact that God took him from His father's house and from the land of his kindred. God's purpose was quite clear from what Abraham had already experienced. There must not be any attempt to reverse it. What He had done for Abraham He could do for another. He relied upon God's promise for the future. He remembered the oath taken by God at the time of the sacrifice of Isaac. He remembered that God had declared His purpose of gathering a redeemed humanity into the inheritance, which He had prepared for it. He realized that, in order to accomplish this purpose. God would most certainly gather out His own from a sinful world.

Abraham's was an old age possessed of absolute assurance of the divine favor. He told his servant that God, who had been with him all through his long life, would prosper the errand, and bring about that which was desired. In the event of the unwillingness of the woman to come the servant would be clear of his oath. Abraham had the faith to believe that she would come. The same believing faith is necessary for success in evangelism today. Complete dependence upon God is necessary. The one who preaches or witnesses for Christ is not responsible for the acceptance or rejection of Christ on the part of the one spoken to, but he is responsible for the clear presentation of the message. If he presents the call and it is not accepted, he has done his duty.

"Only bring not my son thither again." In these words of warning there is a double significance. They mean that the gospel must never be watered down to accommodate the scruples of those to whom it is presented. They also mean that God is resolved to go forward with His great plan of redemption, however much His offer of salvation is refused in the world. Abraham's servant thus bound himself to carry out the wishes of his master. We, too, are bound to our Master's interests by the very terms of our discipleship. He calls us to follow Him and to serve Him. To place other interests above His is incompatible with discipleship.

"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." The camels had no intelligent part in the mission. They performed their part without the slightest realization of the real meaning of the journey. They were incapable of understanding. "All the goods of his master were in his hand." That is, the servant could use everything that Abraham had, and he was wealthy. That ought to teach us how to do the Lord's work. We do not go to the world for what we need. Everything that God has is for His work. Then why should we not trust Him to supply the needs? When we carry on the Lord's work, it is not for us to go to the men of the world, but we should go to God. The Lord meets the needs of those who trust Him. Sometimes He may let you get along on a short allowance, but He will see you through.

This servant arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. Notice that the servant did not wander aimlessly out, speaking for his master to all whom he encountered on the road. He had a definite mission to a definite place. Successful evangelism proceeds on the same lines. Each servant of Christ has a definite call to a definite work in a definite place. He should be ready and willing to obey that call when he hears it.

You will note that the servant made the camels to kneel down by a well. The camels performed this act unintelligently and in their ordinary routine. They knelt for unloading. But

they knelt in something of the same way in which many have been made to kneel due to the influence of the gospel of Christ upon them. He went to this well at the time of the day when the women went out to draw water. He went to the place where he would naturally expect to find those whom he was seeking, at the time when he would expect to find them. Having placed himself where he could contact the one whom he was seeking, the servant took the next essential step. He prayed to God. This shows us that one of the conditions of receiving an answer to our prayers is that we should be in the place of God's will and choice, when we make them. This servant told God that he had done his part and was in the place where he could go no further and do no more. A man will pray for what he wants, but not for what he does not want. His prayer implied a simple and unwavering faith in the complete control of God over the hearts and minds of men. Of all the young women God had appointed one as a wife for Isaac, and the servant desired to be led to her. Success in evangelism today often depends on asking God to lay individuals upon one's heart and concentrating one's efforts upon them. His request for knowledge was not occasioned by lack of faith, but was made in order that he might be certain of God's will and be able to carry it out.

Before the servant was through praying God answered. If God's people do not pray, nothing will be done; if they pray a little, a little will be accomplished; if they pray much, much will be done; and if, after praying much, they pray more, still more will be done.

Verse sixteen describes the bride as beautiful and pure. She went down to the well and filled her pitcher. By reading the scriptures and studying them we can take in the supplies of spiritual sustenance that we need. It is necessary to do this regularly each day. From the place of prayer we come back again into daily life, replenished, refreshed and strengthened.

Abraham's servant requested Rebekah to permit him to drink a little water from her pitcher. He was thereby putting her to the test, although she had no idea that he was doing so. Her response to his request would determine whether he claimed her for his master or not. She told him to drink. Any of the young women who came to the well to draw water would have done likewise. This was a customary courtesy. The fact that she hastened to do so indicated that she had a generous and sympathetic mind. Perhaps it was an unconscious response to the haste and eagerness of the servant. It says she "let down her pitcher upon her hand," meaning that she brought it down from her head, and held it to his lips. Then Rebekah said, "I will draw water for thy camels also." Here was the very sign for which the servant had asked. Such a thing was quite unusual and showed Rebekah to be one who was ready to do more than was required of her, that is to say, to act in grace. She was glad and eager to do this kindness. When she emptied the pitcher of the water that she had drawn for herself in order to give it to the camels, she pictured the redeemed giving up to the people of the world what they might have used for themselves. She did not stop half-way, but supplied the need of all.