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# Men of the Bible



## ABRAHAM'S FOUR SURRENDERS

A great many people are afraid of the will of God, and yet I believe that one of the sweetest lessons that we can learn in the school of Christ is the surrender of our wills to God, letting Him plan for us and rule our lives. If I know my own mind, if an angel should come from the throne of God and tell me that I could have my will done the rest of my days on earth, and that everything I wished should be carried out, or that I might refer it back to God, and let God's will be done in me and through me, I think in an instant I would say:

"Let the will of God be done."

I cannot look into the future. I do not know what is going to happen to-morrow; in fact, I do not know what may happen before night; so I cannot choose for myself as well as God can choose for me, and it is much better to surrender my will to God's will. Abraham found this out, and I want to call your attention to four surrenders that he was called to make. I think that they give us a pretty good key to his life.

### I

In the first place, Abraham was called to give up *his kindred and his native country*, and to go out, not knowing whither he went.

While men were busy building up Babylon, God called this man out of that nation of the Chaldeans. He lived down near the mouth of the Euphrates, perhaps three hundred miles south of Babylon, when he was called to go into a land that he perhaps had never heard of before, and to possess that land.

In the twelfth chapter of Genesis, the first four verses, we read:

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” Now notice the promise: “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy five years old and when he departed out of Haran.”

It was several years before this that God first told him to leave Ur of the Chaldees. Then he came to Haran, which is about half-way between the valley of the Euphrates and the valley of the Jordan. God had called him into the land of the Canaanite, and

#### HE CAME HALF-WAY,

and stayed there—we do not know just how long, but probably about five years.

Now, I believe that there are a great many Christians who are what might be called *Haran Christians*. They go to Haran, and there they stay. They only half obey. They are not out-and-out. How was it that God got him out of Haran? His father died. The

first call was to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go into Canaan, but instead of going all the way they stopped half-way, and it was affliction that drove Abram out of Haran. A great many of us bring afflictions on ourselves, because we are not out-and-out for the Lord. We do not obey Him fully. God had plans He wanted to work out through Abram, and He could not work them out as long as he was there at Haran. Affliction came, and then we find that he left Haran, and started for the Promised Land.

There is just one word there about Lot—"and Lot went with Abram." That is the key, you might say, to Lot's life. He was a weaker character than Abram, and he followed his uncle.

When they got into the land that God had promised to give him, Abram found it already inhabited by great and warlike nations—not by one nation, but by a number of nations. What could he do, a solitary man, in that land? Not only was his faith tested by finding the land pre-occupied by other strong and hostile nations, but he had not been there a great while before a great famine came upon him. No doubt a great conflict was going on in his breast, and he said to himself:

"What does this mean? Here I am, thirteen hundred miles away from my own land, and surrounded by a warlike people. And not only that, but a famine has come, and I must get out of this country."

Now, I don't believe that God sent Abram down to Egypt. I think that He was only testing him, that he might in his darkness and in his trouble be

DRAWN NEARER TO GOD.

I believe that many a time trouble and sorrow are permitted to come to us that we may see the face of God,

and be shut up to trust in Him alone. But Abram went down into Egypt, and there he got into trouble by denying his wife. That is the blackest spot on Abram's character. But when we get into Egypt we will always be getting into trouble.

## II

Abram became rich; but we don't hear of any altar—in fact, we hear of no altar at Haran, and we hear of no altar in Egypt. When he came up with Lot out of Egypt, they had great possessions, and they increased in wealth, and their herds had multiplied, until there was a strife among their herdsmen.

Now it is that Abram's character shines out again. He might have said that he had a right to the best of everything, because he was the older, and because Lot would probably not have been worth anything if it had not been for Abram's help. But instead of standing up for *his rights*, to choose the best of the land, he surrenders them, and says to the nephew:

“Take your choice. If you go to the right hand, I will take the left; or if you prefer the left hand, then I will go to the right.”

Here is where Lot made his mistake. If there was a man under the sun that needed Abram's counsel, and Abram's prayers, and Abram's influence, and to have been surrounded by the friends of Abram, it was Lot. He was just one of those weak characters that

### NEEDED BOLSTERING UP.

But his covetous eye looked upon the well-watered plains of the valley of the Jordan that reached out towards Sodom, and he chose them. He was influenced by what he saw. He walked by sight,

instead of by faith. I think that is where a great many Christian people make their mistake—walking by sight, instead of by faith. If he had stopped to think, Lot might have known that it would be disastrous to him and his family to go anywhere near Sodom. Abram and Lot must both have known about the wickedness of those cities on the plains, and although they were rich, and there was chance of making money, it was better for Lot to keep his family out of that wicked city. But his eyes fell upon the well-watered plains, and he pitched his tent towards Sodom, and separated from Abram.

Now, notice that after Abram had let Lot have his choice, and Lot had gone off to the plains, for the first time God had Abram alone. His father had died at Haran, and he had left his brother there. Now, after his nephew had left him, he moved down to Hebron, and there built an altar. "Hebron" means *communion*. Here it is that God came to him and said:

"Abram, look around as far as your eye can reach—it is all yours. Look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

"Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord."

It is astonishing how far you can see in that country. God took Moses up on Pisgah and showed him the

**Promised Land.** In Palestine, a few years ago, I found that on Mount Olivet I could look over and see the Mediterranean. I could look into the valley of the Jordan, and see the Dead Sea. And on the plains of Sharon I could look up to Mount Lebanon, and up at Mount Hermon, away beyond Nazareth. You can see with the naked eye almost the length and breadth of that country. So when God said to Abram that he might look to the north, and that as far as he could see he could have the land; and then look to the south, with its well-watered plains that Lot coveted, and to the east and the west, from the sea to the Euphrates—then God gave His friend Abram a clear title, no conditions whatever, saying:

**“I will give it all to you.”**

Lot chose all he could get, but it was not much. Abram let God choose for him, and was given all the land. Lot had no security for his choice, and soon lost all. Abram's right was maintained undisputed by God the giver.

Do you know that the children of Israel never had faith enough to take possession of all that land as far as the Euphrates? If they had, probably Nebuchadnezzar would never have come and taken them captives. But that was God's offer; He said to Abram, **“Unto your seed I will give it forever, clear to the valley of the Euphrates.”** From that time on God enlarged Abram's tents. He enriched His promises, and gave him much more than He had promised down there in the valley of the Euphrates when He first called him out. It is very interesting to see how God kept

#### ADDING TO THE PROMISE

**for the benefit of His friend Abram.**

**Let us go back a moment to Lot, and see what Lot**

gained by making that choice. I believe that you can find five thousand Lots to one Abram to-day. People are constantly walking by sight, lured by the temptations of men and of the world. Men are very anxious to get their sons into lucrative positions, although it may be disastrous to their character; it may ruin them morally and religiously, and in every other way. The glitter of this world seems to attract them. Some one has said that Abram was a far-sighted man, and Lot was a short-sighted man; his eye fell on the land right around him. There is the one thing that we are quite sure of—he was so short-sighted that his possessions soon left him. And you will find that these people who are constantly building for time are disappointed.

I have no doubt that the men of Sodom said that Lot was

▲ MUCH SHREWERD MAN

than his uncle Abram, and that if he lived twenty-five years he would be the richer of the two, and that by coming into Sodom he could sell his cattle and sheep and goats and whatever else he had for large sums, and could get a good deal better market than Abram could back there on the plains of Mamre.

For awhile Lot did make money very fast, and became a very successful man. If you had gone into Sodom a little while before destruction came, you would have found that Lot owned some of the best corner lots in town, and that Mrs. Lot moved in what they called the *bon-ton* society or upper ten; and you would have found that she was at the theatre two or three nights in the week. If they had progressive euchre, she could play as well as anybody; and her



daughters could dance as well as any other Sodomites. We find Lot sitting in the gates, he was getting on amazingly well. He might have been one of the principal men in the city; Judge Lot, or the Honorable Lot of Sodom. If there had been a Congress in those days, they would have run him for a seat in Congress. They might have elected him

MAYOR OF SODOM.

He was getting on amazingly well; wonderfully prosperous.

But by and by there comes a war. If you go into Sodom, you must take Sodom's judgment when it comes, for it is bound to come. The battle turned against those five cities of the plain and they took Lot and his wife and all that they had, and one man escaped and ran off to Hebron and told Abram what had taken place. Abram took his servants,—three hundred and eighteen of them,—went after these victorious kings, and soon returned with all the booty and all the prisoners.

III

On Abram's way back with the spoils one of the strangest scenes of history occurs. Whom should he meet but Melchizedek, who brought out bread and wine; and the priestly king blessed the Father of the Faithful. After the old king of peace had blest him, he met the King of Sodom, and the King of Sodom said, "You take the money, and I will take the people"; but Abram replied:

"Not a thing will I take, not even the shoe-latchets, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich."

There is another surrender. There was a temptation *to get rich at the hands of the King of Sodom*. But the King of Salem had blessed him, and this world did not tempt him. It tempted Lot, and no doubt Lot thought Abram made a great mistake when he refused to take this wealth; but Abram would not touch a thing; he spurned it and turned from it. He had the world under his feet; he was living for another world. He would not be enriched from such a source.

Every one of us is met by the prince of this world and the Prince of Peace. The one tempts us with wealth, pleasure, ambition: but our Prince and Priest is ready to succor and strengthen us in the hour of temptation.

A friend of mine told me some years ago that his wife ~~was~~ very fond of painting, but that for a long time he never could see any beauty in her paintings; they all looked like a daub to him. One day his eyes troubled him and he went to see an oculist. The man looked in amazement at him and said:

"You have what we call a short eye and a long eye, and that makes everything a blur."

He gave him some glasses that just fitted him, and then he could see clearly. Then, he said, he understood why it was that his wife was so carried away with art, and he built an art gallery, and filled it full of beautiful things, because everything looked so beautiful after he had had his eyes straightened out.

Now there are lots of people that have

A LONG EYE AND A SHORT EYE,

and they make miserable work of their Christian life. They keep one eye on the eternal city and the other

eye on the well-watered plains of Sodom. That was the way it was with Lot: he had a short eye and a long eye. It would be pretty hard work to believe that Lot was saved if it were not for the New Testament. But there we read that "Lot's righteous soul was vexed,"—so he had a righteous soul, but he had a stormy time. He didn't have peace and joy and victory like Abram.

After Abram had given up the wealth of Sodom that was offered him, then God came and enlarged his borders again—enlarged the promise. God said:

"I will be your exceeding great reward; I will protect you."

Abram might have thought that these kings that he had defeated might get other kings and other armies to come, and he might have thought of himself as a solitary man, with only three hundred and eighteen men, so that he might have feared lest he be swept from the face of the earth. But the Lord came and said:

"Abram, fear not."

That is the first time those oft-repeated words, "fear not," occur in the Bible.

"Fear not, for I will be your shield and your reward."

I would rather have that promise than all the armies of earth and all the navies of the world to protect me—to have the God of heaven for my Protector! God was teaching Abram that He was to be his Friend and his Shield, if he would surrender himself wholly to His keeping, and trust in His goodness. That is what we want—to surrender ourselves up to God, fully and wholly.

In Colorado the superintendent of some works told

me of a miner that was promoted, who came to the superintendent, and said:

"There is a man that has seven children, and I have only three, and he is having a hard struggle. Don't promote me, but promote him."

I know of nothing that speaks louder for Christ and Christianity than to see a man or woman giving up what they call their rights for others, and "in honor preferring one another."

We find that Abram was constantly surrendering his own selfish interests and trusting to God. What was the result? Of all the men that ever lived he is the most renowned. He never did anything the world would call great. The largest army he ever mustered was three hundred and eighteen men. How Alexander would have sneered at such an army as that! How Cæsar would have looked down on such an army! How Napoleon would have curled his lip as he thought of Abram with an army of three hundred and eighteen! We are not told that he was a great astronomer; we are not told that he was a great scientist; we are not told that he was a great statesman, or anything the world calls great; but there was one thing he could do—he could live an unselfish life, and in honor could waive his rights, and in that way he became the friend of God; in that way he has become immortal. There is

#### NO NAME IN HISTORY

so well known as the name of Abram. Even Christ is not more widely known, for the Mohammedans, the Persians, and the Egyptians make a great deal of Abram. His name has been for centuries and centuries favorably known in Damascus. God promised

him that great men, and warriors, and kings, and emperors, should spring from his loins. Was there ever a nation that has turned out such men? Think of Moses, and Joseph, and Joshua, and Caleb, and Samuel, and David, and Solomon, and Elisha. Think of Elijah, and Daniel, and Isaiah, and all the other wonderful Bible characters that have sprung from this man! Then think of Peter, of James, and John, and Paul, and John the Baptist, a mighty army. No man can number the multitude of wonderful men that have sprung from this one man called out of the land of the Chaldeans, unknown and an idolater, probably, when God called him; and yet how literally God has fulfilled His promise that through him He would bless all the nations of the earth. All because he surrendered himself fully and wholly to let God bless him.

#### IV

The last surrender is perhaps the most touching and the hardest of all to understand. Perhaps he could not have borne it until the evening of life. God had been taking him along, step by step, until now he had reached a place where he had learned to obey fully whatever God told him to do. I believe the world has yet to see what God will do with the man who is perfectly surrendered. Next to God's own Son, Abraham was perhaps the man who came nearest to this standard.

#### FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Abraham had been in the Promised Land without the promised heir. God had promised that He would bless all the nations of the earth through him, and yet He did not give him a son. Abraham's faith almost

staggered a number of times. Ishmael was born, but God set aside the son of the bondwoman, for he was not to be the ancestor of the Son of God. God was setting Abram apart simply that He might prepare the way for His own Son, and now, at last, a messenger comes down from heaven to Hebron, and tells Abraham in his old age that he should have a son.

It seemed too good to be true. He had hard work to believe it; but at the appointed time Isaac was born into that family. I don't believe there was ever a child born into the world that caused so much joy in the home as in Abraham's heart and home. How Abraham and that old mother, Sarah, must have doted on that child! How their eyes feasted on him!

But just when the lad was growing up into manhood Abraham received another very strange command, and there was another surrender—*his only son*. Perhaps he was making an idol of that boy, and thought more of him than he did of the God that gave him. There must be no idol in the heart if we are going to do the will of God on earth.

I can imagine that one night the old patriarch retired worn out and weary. The boy had gone fast to sleep, when suddenly a heavenly messenger came and told him that he must take that boy off on to a mountain that God was to show him, and offer him up as a sacrifice. No more sleep that night! If you had looked into that tent the next morning I can imagine that you would have seen the servants flying round and making preparations for the master's taking a long journey. He perhaps keeps the secret locked up in his heart, and he doesn't tell even Sarah or Isaac. He doesn't tell the servants, even the faithful servant

Eliezer, what is to take place. About nine o'clock you might have seen those four men—Abraham, Isaac and the two young men with them—start off on the long journey. Once in a while Abraham turns his head aside and wipes away the tear. He doesn't want Isaac to see what a terrible struggle is going on within. It is a hard battle to give up his will and to surrender that boy, the idol of his life. Oh, how he loved him!

I can imagine the first night. The boy soon falls asleep, tired and weary with the hot day's journey, but the old man doesn't sleep. I can see him look into the face of the innocent boy, and say:

"Soon my boy will be gone, and I will be returning without him."

Perhaps most of the night his voice could have been heard in prayer, as he cries to God to help him; and as God had helped him in the past so God was helping him that night.

The next day they journeyed on, and again a terrible conflict goes on. Again he brushes away the tear. Perhaps Isaac sees it, and says:

"Father is going away to meet his God, and the angels may come down and talk with him as at Hebron. That is what he is so agitated about."

The second night comes, and the old man looks into that face every hour of the night. He sleeps a little, but not much, and the next morning at family worship he breaks down. He cannot finish his prayer.

They journey on that day—it is a long day—and the old patriarch say: "This is the last day I am to have my boy with me. To-morrow I must offer him up; to-morrow I shall be without the son of my bosom."

The third night comes, and what a night it must

have been! I can imagine he didn't eat or sleep that night. Nothing is going to break his fast, and every hour of the night he goes to look into the face of that boy, and once in a while he bends over and kisses him, and he says:

"O Isaac, how can I give thee up?"

Morning breaks. What a morning it must have been for that father! He doesn't eat; he tries to pray, but his voice falters. After breakfast they start on their journey again. He has not gone a great way before he lifts up his eyes, and yonder is Mount Moriah. His heart begins to beat quickly. He says to the two young men:

"You stay here, and I will go yonder with my son."

Then, as father and son went up Mount Moriah, with the wood, and the fire, and the knife, the boy turns suddenly to the father, and says:

"Father, where is the lamb? We haven't any offering, father."

It was a common thing for Isaac to see his father offer up a victim, but there is no lamb now.

Did you ever think

HOW PROPHETIC THAT ANSWER WAS when Abraham turned and said to the son, "God will provide Himself a sacrifice"? I don't know that Abraham understood the full meaning of it, but a few hundred years after God did provide a sacrifice right there. Mount Moriah and Mount Calvary are close together, and God's Son was provided as a sacrifice for the world.

On Mount Moriah this father and son begin to roll up the stones, and together they build the altar; then they lay on the wood and everything is ready for the victim. Isaac looks around to see where the lamb is,



and then the father can keep it from the son no longer, and he says:

“My boy, sit down here close to the altar, and let me tell you something.”

Then perhaps that old, white-haired patriarch puts his arm around the lad, and tells how God came to him in the land of the Chaldeans, and the story of his whole life, and how, by one promise after another, God had kept enlarging the promised blessings, and that He would bless all the nations of the earth through him. Isaac was to be the heir. But he says:

“My son, the last night I was at home God came to me in the hours of the night and told me to bring you here and offer you up as a sacrifice. I don't understand what it means, but I can tell you one thing: it is much harder for me to offer you up than it would be for me to be sacrificed myself.”

There was a time when I used to think more of the love of Jesus Christ than of God the Father. I used to think of God as a stern judge on the throne, from whose wrath Jesus Christ had saved me. It seems to me now I could not have

#### A FALSER IDEA OF GOD

than that. Since I have become a father I have made this discovery: that it takes more love and self-sacrifice for the father to give up the son than it does for the son to die. Is a father on earth a true father that would not rather suffer than to see his child suffer? Do you think that it did not cost God something to redeem this world? It cost God the most precious possession He ever had. When God gave His Son, He gave all, and yet He gave Him freely for you and me.

I can imagine that Abraham talks to Isaac and tells

him how hard it is to offer him up. "But God has commanded it," he says, "and I surrender my will to God's will. I don't understand it, but I believe that God will be able to raise you up, and maybe He will."

They fell on their faces, and prayed together. After prayer I can see that old father take his boy to his bosom, and embrace him for the last time. He kisses and kisses him. Then he takes those hands that are so innocent, and binds them, and he binds the feet, and he ties him up, and lays him on the altar, and gives him a last kiss. Then he takes the knife, and raises his hand. No sooner is the hand lifted than a voice calls from heaven:

"Abraham, Abraham, spare thy son!"

You remember that Christ said, "Abraham saw my day, and was glad." I have an idea that God then and there just

#### LIFTED THE CURTAIN OF TIME

for Abraham. He looked down into the future, saw God's Son coming up Calvary, bearing his sins and the sins of all posterity. God gave him that secret, and told him how His Son was to come into the world and take away his sins.

Now, my friends, notice: whenever God has been calling me to higher service, there has always been a conflict with my will. I have fought against it, but God's will has been done instead of mine. When I came to Jesus Christ, I had a terrible battle to surrender my will, and to take God's will. When I gave up business, I had another battle for three months; I fought against it. It was a terrible battle. But oh! how many times I have thanked God that I gave up my will and took God's will. Then there was another

time when God was calling me into higher service, to go out and preach the gospel all over the land, instead of staying in Chicago. I fought against it for months; but the best thing I ever did was when I surrendered my will, and let the will of God be done in me. Because Abraham obeyed God and held back not even his only child, God enlarged his promises once again:

“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.”

If you take my advice, you will have no will other than God's will. Make a full and complete surrender, and the sweet messages of heaven will come to you. God will whisper into your soul

#### THE SECRETS OF HEAVEN.

After Abraham did what God told him, then it was that God told His friend all about His Son. If we make a full surrender, God will give us something better than we have ever known before. We will get a new vision of Jesus Christ, and will thank God not only in this life but in the life to come. May God help each and every one of us to make a full and complete and unconditional surrender to God, fully and wholly, now and forever.