

# NOTES ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS

by

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

*THIS chapter affords a beautiful exemplification of the results of an obedient, separated walk.*

**“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me”** (Revelation 3:20). Again, we read, **“Jesus answered, and said unto him, If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”** (John 14:23).

From these passages, taken in connection with our chapter, we learn that an obedient soul enjoys a character of communion entirely unknown to one who moves in a worldly atmosphere.

This does not touch, in the most remote manner, the question of forgiveness or justification.

All believers are clothed in the same spotless robe of righteousness, all stand in one common justification, under the eye of God. The one life flows down from the Head in Heaven through all the members on earth. This is plain.

The doctrine, in reference to the above important points, is fully established in the word; and has been, again and again, unfolded through the foregoing pages of this volume. But we should remember that justification is one thing, and the fruit thereof quite another. To be a child is one thing, to be an obedient child is quite another.

Now, a father loves an obedient child, and will make such a child more the depositary of his thoughts and plans. And is this not true, in reference to our heavenly Father? Unquestionably.

John 14:23, puts this quite beyond dispute; and, moreover, it proves that for one to speak of loving Christ and not to **“keep his words,”** is hypocrisy.

**“If a man love me, he will keep my words.”**

Hence, if we are not keeping Christ’s words, it is a sure proof we are not walking in the love of his name. Love to Christ is proved by doing the things which he commands, and not by merely saying, **“Lord, Lord.”**

It is of very little avail to say, “**I go, sir,**” while the heart has no idea of going.

However, in Abraham we see one who, however he may have failed in detail, was nevertheless characterized in the main by a close, simple, and elevated walk with God; and in the interesting section of his history now before us, we find him in the enjoyment of three special privileges, namely,

- Providing refreshment for the Lord,
- Enjoying full communion with the Lord, and
- Interceding for others before the Lord.

These are high distinctions; and yet are they only such as ever result from an obedient, separated, holy walk.

Obedience refreshes the Lord, as being the fruit of his own grace in our hearts. We see in the only perfect man that ever lived how he constantly refreshed and delighted the Father. Again and again God bore testimony to him from Heaven, as his “**beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased.**”

The path of Christ furnished a continual feast to Heaven.

His ways were ever sending up a fragrant incense to the throne of God.

From the manger to the Cross, he did always the things which pleased his Father. There was no interruption, no variation, no salient point. He was the only perfect One. There only can the Spirit trace a perfect life below.

Here and there, as we look along the current of inspiration, we find one and another who occasionally refreshed the mind of Heaven. Thus, in the chapter before us, we find the tent of the stranger at Mamre affording refreshment to the Lord himself, - refreshment willingly offered and willingly accepted. (Ver. 1-8).

Then we find Abraham enjoying high communion with the Lord, first in reference to his own personal interest, (ver. 9-15) and secondly in reference to the destinies of Sodom (Ver. 16, 21).

What confirmation to Abraham’s heart in the absolute promise “**Sarah shall have a son!**”

Yet this promise only elicited a laugh from Sarah, as it had elicited one from Abraham in the preceding chapter.

There are two kinds of laughter spoken of in Scripture. There is first the laughter with which the Lord fills our mouth, when, at some trying crisis, he appears in a signal manner for our relief. “**When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them; the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.**” (Psalm 126:1, 2).

Again, there is the laughter with which unbelief fills our mouths, when God's promises are too magnificent for our narrow hearts to take in, or the visible agency too small in our judgment for the accomplishment of His grand designs.

The first of these we are never ashamed or afraid to avow. Zion's sons are not ashamed to say, **"then was our mouth filled with laughter"** (Psalm 126:2). When the Lord makes us to laugh, we may laugh heartily.

**"But Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid."**

Unbelief makes us cowards and liars; faith makes us bold and truthful - It enables us to **"come boldly,"** and to **"draw near with true hearts."**

But, further, Abraham is made the depository of God's thoughts and counsels about Sodom.

Though having nothing to do with it personally, yet he was so near the Lord that he was let into His mind in reference to it.

The way to know the divine purposes about this present evil world, is not to be mixed up with it in its schemes and speculations, but to be entirely separated from it.

The more closely we walk with God, and the more subject we are to His Word, the more we shall know of his mind about everything.

I do not need to study the newspaper in order to know what is going to happen in the world. God's word reveals all I want to know. In its pure and sanctifying pages I learn all about the character, the course, and the destiny of the world; whereas, if I go to the men of the world for news, I may expect that the devil will use them to cast dust in my eyes.

Had Abraham visited Sodom in order to obtain information about its facts, had he applied to some of its leading intelligent men, to know what they thought of Sodom's present condition and future prospects, how would he have been answered? Doubtless they would have called his attention to their agricultural and architectural schemes, the vast resources of the country; they would have placed before his eyes one vast, mingled scene of buying and selling, building and planting, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Doubtless, too, they would never dream of judgment and if anyone had made mention thereof, their mouths would have been filled with infidel laughter. Hence, then, it is plain, that Sodom was not the place in which to learn about Sodom's end.

No; **"the place, where Abraham stood before the Lord,"** afforded the only proper point from whence to take in the whole prospect.

- There he could stand entirely above the fogs and mists which had gathered upon Sodom's horizon.
- There, in the clearness and calmness of the divine presence, he could understand it all.

And what use did he make of his knowledge and his elevated position? How was he occupied in the Lord's presence?

The answer to these inquiries leads us to the third special privilege enjoyed by our patriarch in this chapter, namely, - *Intercession for others before the Lord*.

He was enabled to plead for those who were mixed up in Sodom's defilement, and in danger of being involved in Sodom's judgment. This was a happy and a holy use to make of his place of nearness to God. Thus it is ever.

The soul that can "**draw near to God**," in the assurance of faith, having the heart and conscience perfectly at rest, being able to repose in God as to the past, the present, and the future,- that soul will be able and willing to intercede for others.

The man who has on "**the whole armor of God**," will be able to pray for all "**saints**."

And, oh! what a view this gives us of the intercession of our Great High-priest, who has passed into the heavens!

- What infinite repose he enjoys in all the divine counsels!
- With what conscious acceptance he sits enthroned amid the brightness of the Majesty in the heavens!
- And with what efficacy he pleads before that Majesty for those who are toiling along amid the defilement of this present scene!

Happy, ineffably happy, they who are the subjects of such all-prevailing intercession!

At once happy and secure. Would that we had hearts to enter into all this, - hearts enlarged by personal communion with God, to take in more of the infinite fulness of his grace, and the suitability of his provision, for all our need.

We see in this Scripture that how blessed soever Abraham's intercession might be, yet it was limited, because the intercessor was but a man. It did not reach the need.

He said, "**I will speak yet but this once**," and there he stopped short, as if afraid of having presented too large a draft at the treasury of infinite grace, or forgetting that faith's check was never yet dishonored at God's bank.

It was not that he was straitened in God. By no means. There was abundance of grace and patience in Him to have hearkened to His dear servant, had He proceeded even to three or one. But the servant was limited.

He was afraid of overdrawing his account.

He ceased to ask, and God ceased to give.

Not so our blessed Intercessor. Of him it can be said, “**He is able to save to the uttermost . . . seeing he ever liveth to make intercession.**”

May our hearts cling to him in all our need, our weakness, and our conflict.

Before closing this section, I would offer a remark, which, whether it may be regarded as properly flowing out of the truth contained therein, or not, is nevertheless worthy of consideration. It is of the utmost importance in the study of Scripture to distinguish between God’s moral government of the world, and the specific hope of the church.

The entire body of Old Testament prophecy, and much of the New, treats of the former, and, in so doing, presents, I need hardly say, a subject of commanding interest to every Christian.

It is interesting to know what God is doing, and will do, with all the nations of the earth, - interesting to read God’s thoughts about Tyre, Babylon, Nineveh, and Jerusalem, - about Egypt, Assyria, and the land of Israel. In short, the entire race of Old Testament prophecy demands the prayerful attention of every true believer.

But let it be remembered, we do not find therein contained the proper hope of the Church. How could we?

If we have not therein the Church’s existence directly revealed, how could we have the Church’s hope? Impossible.

It is not that the Church cannot find there a rich harvest of divine moral principles which she may most happily and profitably use. She undoubtedly can; but this is quite another thing from finding there her proper existence and specific hope.

And yet, a large portion of the Old Testament prophecies has been applied to the Church; and this application has involved the whole subject in such mist and confusion that simple minds are scared away from the study; and, in neglecting the study of prophecy, they have also neglected that which is quite distinct from prophecy, properly so called, even the hope of the Church; which hope, be it well remembered, is not anything which God is going to do with the nations of the earth, but to meet the Lord Jesus in the clouds of Heaven, to be forever with him, and forever like him.

Many may say, I have no head for prophecy. Perhaps not, but you have a heart for Christ? Surely if you love Christ, you will love his appearing, though you may have no capacity for prophetic investigation.

An affectionate wife may not have a head to enter into her husband’s affairs; but she has a heart for her husband’s return.

She might not be able to understand his ledger and day-book; but she knows his footstep and recognizes his voice.

The most unlettered saint, if only he has affection for the person of the Lord Jesus can entertain the most intense desire to see Him; and this is the Church's hope.

The apostle could say to the Thessalonians, **“Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven”** (I Thessalonians 1:9, 10).

Now, evidently, those Thessalonian saints could, at the moment of their conversion, have known little, if anything, of prophecy, or the special subject thereof; and yet they were, at that very moment, put into the full possession and power of the specific hope of the Church,- even the coming of the Son.

Thus is it throughout the entire New Testament.

There, no doubt, we have prophecy. There, too, we have God's moral government; but, at the same time, numberless passages might be adduced in proof of the fact that the common hope of Christians in apostolic times - the simple, unimpeded, and unencumbered hope - was, THE RETURN OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

May the Holy Ghost revive **“that blessed hope”** in the Church,- may He gather in the number of the elect, and **“make ready a people prepared for the Lord!”**

~ end of chapter 18 ~

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