

THE STORY OF ISAAC

DR. CHAPMAN'S SUNDAY SERMON

Going Back to Old Customs--No Man is as Bad as His Worst Principles Would Indicate.

NEW YORK CITY.—It may now be stated as a fact that the sermons of the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman are heard and read by more people than are those of any American pulpit orator. His style seems to have made a deep impression on that portion of the public which likes to read its discourse in the weekly paper. For these admirers Dr. Chapman has prepared the following sermon, entitled "Revisiting Old Customs." It is reached from the text Genesis 26: 18. "And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham, his father."

There are three names in the New Testament inseparably bound together. We rarely think of one without having immediately suggested to us the names of the other two. These three are Peter, James and John. They were specially chosen of Christ for conspicuous service, and were the particular objects of His divine affection. There are three names in the Old Testament quite as intimately associated, and one can scarcely speak the name of one of the three without finding himself running at once in speech to the other two. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob form the Old Testament trio. I do not know how familiar you are with the story of Isaac. I have found myself that I knew very little about him. I was quite familiar with the account of the intended sacrifice on Mt. Moriah, and the fascinating story of his meeting with Rebekah, but concerning other incidents of his life I knew very little. As a matter of fact Isaac does not show off to advantage between Abraham on the one side of him and Jacob on the other; Abraham because of what he was, the father of the faithful, and Jacob because of what he became, for by the power of God he was changed from Jacob, the cheat, to Israel, the prince, having power with God and with men, and one cannot help but feel as he reads the whole story of Isaac's life that it would have been better for him had he died upon the altar. He made a splendid start in life, but so did Noah and Lot, and so have many of you, but that is not enough. At the beginning of his career Isaac goes away beyond the others whose names I have mentioned. We are so taken up with Abraham and his willingness to offer his son that somehow we have forgotten Isaac's willingness to be offered. He really made a splendid start, and was a most estimable young man. If we look at a single verse in his career we say what an excellent man, and if we look at others we find ourselves exclaiming, "How mean he is," and yet so it is with our own lives. Men must not be judged by one paragraph in our experience.

Joseph Parker says, "Our life's story is not to be read through as if it were one sentence; it must be broken up into verses and they are strangely punctuated." We cannot take one verse out of a man's life and say that is the man, for one verse would make him too good, while another would make him quite too bad. I am very sure that you are not quite so good as some acts of your life would lead me to believe. I am equally sure that no man is quite so bad as some parts of his life story would lead us to think him. It is a great encouragement to know that the reading of the story of our lives is a matter of divine elocution. Some men read the most interesting book, and make it pray, while others who know how to read read the most interesting production, and behold, it is thrilling. It is said that Edwin Booth could say the Lord's Prayer in such a way as to bring the tears to your eyes. What a joy it is to know that our story is to be read by one who reads the scroll in the synagogue, and read it in such a way that men contended whether he was reading the old scroll or not. As he reads our lives, humble though they may have been, they will expand into a noble eloquence. We are perfectly safe with His interpretation of our acts.

There are certain texts akin to this, as, for example, "Whose fan is in his hand." It is a good thing that the fan is not in our own hands, for we would be unjust, and equally good that it is not in our enemies' hands, for they would be oftentimes cruel, but with the fan in His hand there will come to us not one touch of discipline but what we need.

There is another text: "The Lord knoweth they that are His." The people of the world misunderstand us, they misinterpret our best actions, but He knows.

There is still another, "He knoweth our frames and He remembereth that we are dust." That mistake of yours yesterday which the world condemned He perfectly understood, because He knew your weakness. What a joy it is to know that we are in His hands.

The subject of wells is interesting. In Oriental times a well of water was a fortune. When a king dug a well he became as famous as if he had built a pyramid. Great battles were fought to gain possession of wells and mighty conquests waged for their defense. Castles and towers were erected to secure their possession. Abraham dug at least four wells; how many more I do not know, but these four were filled in by the Philistines, and it is with their reasoning that we have to do in the text. I like to speak of wells because there is music in the very sound of the word. In Isaiah, the twelfth chapter, second and third verses, we read, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." This is not only an Old Testament figure, but a New, for Jesus said, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4: 14. Therefore the gospel is a well, and you have never had a drink of spring water as you have been weary in your tramp up the mountains or across the plain that could compare with the refreshing influence of a drink of the water of life from the well of salvation. Some of you have had sorrow, your hearts have been almost breaking, you have wondered where you might find help; stoop and drink this morning of this old gospel well. Some of you have failed, and indeed who has not in this awful struggle of life, but in your failure you have wondered if there could ever be restoration; stoop and drink this morning, and you will find that as you drink you will take in of His life, and this is the secret of victory over sin. Some of you are exceedingly weak, and you dare not trust yourself for another day. I bid you drink of the water of the well of salvation, and you will find a strange new strength taking possession of you. Isaiah 55: 1-2. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to

the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

These wells had names. It is a little singular as we study the story of Abraham and Isaac to find the names given to the wells, and likewise singular that in these names we find a revelation of our own experience in the journey of life.

First, the first well was named "Strife." We have all had a drink at this well. We have had it in our business as we have been striving for success; we have met it in our homes as we have aimed to conduct them as homes should ever be conducted. We might as well understand that as we dig wells in this world we must expect opposition. We cannot be let alone, and this strife will come from one of three sources, perhaps from all three.

First.—The world. Jesus said to His disciples, "Marvel not if the world hate you." We must expect to hear from the devil. It is rather old-fashioned in these days to say that He has a personality, but I have had so many dealings with him myself, and have seen his work so perfectly in the lives of others that I know he is a person, but in many respects the greatest strife must come from the flesh, and I find a hint of this in the story of Isaac. What envy was to Cain, and wine to Noah, and lewdness to Ham and wealth to Lot, the desire for venison was to Isaac, for when he was dying and his thoughts should have been centered upon Jehovah he longs for venison that he may satisfy himself, and the story of his getting that venison and its being traded for a birthright is one of the sad bits of history of the Old Testament, but let it be known that whenever a man pampers himself and lives for himself he is on the way to distress quite as great.

Second.—"Hatred." This is a strange name for Abraham's well, but so he called it. Some of us have been there, and alas, have tasted of the bitter waters. It is a sad thing to have hatred in your heart. "It hinders prayer; beclouds heaven, takes the angel out of your face; chokes the song in your throat; gives your hands the wrong twist in writing letters, puts between the lines which almost breaks the heart of the reader." He who hates cannot sing, he cannot pray, he cannot offer a sacrifice. Matthew 5: 23, "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee." Do this and the song will return and God will accept the sacrifice. The bitter waters of Morah were made sweet by the casting in of the wood of a certain tree. I tell you of a tree on which Christ died; get the peace of this Christ into your experience, live for others, suffer for others, die for others if need be, and the bitterness of your life will be instantly changed.

Third.—"Room." This, too, is a strange name for an Old Testament well, but with the opening of this well the strife ceased, for instantly Isaac had found the place where God was willing he should stay. There is a place for every one to stand in this world. God so intended it. We have crowded men out of their positions in these days. It is true that with the formation and progress of great trusts there is little opportunity for some of us, but this is not in accordance with the plan of God. Somewhere there is a well waiting to be discovered, and God expects you to drink and to be satisfied. It may be that that well is in a foreign land, perhaps it is in the slums of our own city, possibly it may be in your own home, and who knows but that it is in this church, only find God's plan for your life and help to fill it in and you will be full of joy.

Fourth.—"Covenant." This is the name which was given to the fourth well. We must pass through discipline. It is not necessary that we should complain about it for this is life. When Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians he said, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," and this Scripture is frequently quoted as if it were for the unregenerate man, and while it may be applied to him it is for the Christian. We reap what we sow and sow what we reap, in the light of this the wonder is we have had so little discipline.

"Reckon up the prayers you ought to have offered and never spoke; the deeds you ought to have done and never accomplished; reckon up all neglects, all offences against God and man; all weakness of character and the wonder is that we have not been cut off altogether." But I summon you to the well of the covenant and bid you open it up. What if we have discipline and trial when we stand by Him who declares, "I will be with thee," and also explains to us, "That our light afflictions are but for a moment," and that as they tarry, "they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." I bring you good cheer this morning, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

But you will notice that Isaac digged again the wells of water which emphasizes my subject, "A Revival of Old Customs." I am very sure that there are some old customs which in these days we need to have revived.

First.—The old custom of making the home a haven of rest, a type of heaven, and a place of refuge for all the members of the family circle. We greatly underestimate the powerful influence of home upon a young life. When Isaac went out to live for himself you will notice that he pitched his tent by the well Laharoi. I think this must have been because in his childhood's days with Hagar, his nurse, and Ishmael, his half-brother, he tarried there where Hagar must have told him the story of Jehovah, and it is just the natural inclination of his heart in his manhood days to go back where he may be reminded of the happy scenes of his childhood.

You doubtless know of the boy sent as a waif from our city who was found in his new western home tearing the lining out of his cap, and when asked why he did it, he said, "It was my mother's dress and she loved me." I have preached everywhere to men in this country and I have always found that there was one name that could stir the heart of the murderer in his cell, the gambler in his den of iniquity, the outcast on the street, and that name was "Mother." Nero's mother was a murderer, and gave to the world the most cruel man in history. Lord Byron's mother was a proud, intellectual, worldly minded woman and she gave to the world the most intellectual autocrat of his day. George Washington's mother was a good, plain, sensible woman and gave to America the father of his country.

We need better homes to-day. Our homes for our children should be as our parents' homes were for us. If we go back to our homes to-day and study our children we will find that they have not a fault or a virtue that their parents have not got. Oh, for a revival of the old custom of having a family altar in a home where the father acts as a priest and the mother as a saint; we could stir the whole country for Christ. One of my dearest friends was profligate

until he was a ~~man~~ crown. In a great western city he had determined to take his life, threw himself down on his bed to collect himself before the awful deed, and jarred a little book off from a shelf just above his bed and it struck him in the face. With an oath he threw it from him, and then it dawned upon him that it was his mother's Bible given him to read. He walked across the room to pick it up just to show her some mark of respect, and read upon the fly leaf written in her own hand, "Dear boy, you can never get away from your mother's prayers." Instead of being a self-murderer he became one of the country's greatest preachers. I wish that we might dig again the well that our fathers digged before us and make our homes like heaven.

There are some wells that have been filled in in the past by those who are worldly wise and this morning I seek to open them.

First—I would open the well of the way of salvation. The Scripture declares that man is a sinner and deserves to die, but the same Scripture states that Jesus took our place and died in our stead. A heathen on account of his sins had walked for miles with pebbles in his shoes that he might do penance, sat down to rest beneath a tree and heard a missionary preaching of Jesus, and cried out, "That is what I want; give me Jesus." Oh, if I could but open this well from which our fathers drank and make you see the Saviour treading the wine press alone, suffering for you until His heart strings all but snapped, dying in agony for you upon the cross, the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Let us open this old well and drink of its waters. And then I would open the well of consolation for the afflicted. "Why do you mourn for your baby?" said a woman to her friend. "He is better off. Suppose he had lived and become a prodigal and broken your heart with his sin." Away with all such consolation, falsely so called. Your baby is with Him, in His presence, who took little babies in His arms and blessed them, is singing His praises, who said, "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." Your child is with the King, rejoice; he cannot come to you, but you may go to him. All things work together for good to them that love God." Stoop and drink this morning and go away refreshed.

Then I would open the well of the preaching of the gospel. Dr. Talmage has said in one of his sermons on this same text that we have stopped singing, "Come ye sinners poor and needy," for we have reached the time when men do not count themselves sinners. I would to God that we might revive the old custom of preaching as men who preached in other days. When Livingstone preached the sermon that led 500 souls to Christ he was describing the human heart in its uncleanness. When Edwards preached the sermon that stirred all New England his theme was, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." When Whitfield preached the sermon, the power of which still felt in our country, his text was, "Ye must be born again." "Do you preach," said a man to me, "that men are lost without Christ, and are you not afraid in a congregation like yours that they will become offended?" Preach it, certainly I preach it. I would be afraid that God would be offended if I did not preach it. Now hear me, ye men of wealth and women of position, without Christ you are lost. It is not an easy statement to make, but the word of the Lord has spoken it. Oh, that men would stop trifling with God's word, twisting its statements so as to draw forth some other meaning than that intended, and oh that men would stop trifling with God, treating Him as if what He had said in His word was not true when He declared "that all men are sinners and need a Saviour."

"I saw one hanging on a tree, In agony and blood, Who fixed His languid eyes on me, As near the cross I stood."

Sure, never till my latest breath Can I forget that look, It seemed to charge me with His death, Though not a word He spoke.

Alas, I knew not what I did, But now my tears are vain, Where shall my trembling soul be hid, For I the Lord have slain.

Another look He gave which said, "I freely all forgive, This blood is for thy ransom paid, I died that thou mayest live."

Thus while His death my sin displays, In all its blackest hue, Such is the mystery of grace, It seals my pardon, too.

Unsympathetic Judgment. When will men learn that no act and no word, no million acts or words, can exhaustively represent the spirit whose expression they are? Beneath and behind all the manifold activities through which the world learns to know us and we learn to know ourselves is that infinite spirit of ours, which, just because it is infinite and because it is spirit, can never adequately express itself in material form. It cannot make to itself any graven image which will do it justice. And therein lies the shame, the atrocity of unconsidered and unsympathetic judgment. Who can enter into the councils of another? There is so much that we feel and must leave unsaid, so much that we divine, but have no skill to utter. There is no act into which we can pour all our character, no deed which suggests to an outsider the infinite complexity of motive and circumstance which determined it. Every personality is like a vast, harborless island. It is difficult to effect a landing upon it; and when at any point you land, you have done no more than land, the ground has all to be traversed and explored. Shall any one then harshly judge the intricacies of another mind or character, when he does not fully understand his own.

Silent Sorrow. Far better the silence of sorrow than the sound of it. Far better the smile of trust than the tears of doubt. Far better the calm, serene brow than the wrinkles of petulance. The child that believes in his mother laughs at the foot that overturns his castle of blocks, and with a shout of glee he builds again the ruined towers into greater height. So do those who believe in God bear His strokes and take up the broken life and rear it into loftier spiritual attainment. Those who sulk and complain behold naught except blight and loss. And is there anywhere in the world a sadder sight than that of a dispirited man or woman? Ah, yes, in the silence of sorrow many a temple of nobler living has risen grandly to the bending skies of God's love, like that which Solomon planned, upon which the noise of workman's tools was not heard. Out of a quietness of soul such as this have reached the hands that have swung bells celestial into peals of joy.—Presbyterian Journal.

ARP ON THE SWISS.

Reminded of Them by the Story of William Tell.

HITS ALL THE ICONOCLASTS,

Says They Are Trying to Tear Down All the Idols the People Have Worshipped.

How the old people cling to the stories and traditions that charmed their childhood. Good old Mother Akin came to see me and to comfort me in my sickness. She has had her share of trouble, but is always bright and cheerful and brings sunshine with her. Somehow the story of William Tell came up, and when I remarked that it was now generally set down among the critics as a myth or a pretty fable she said "she would not read any such heartless scandals nor did she believe them. The world is full of these iconoclasts who would break up every idol that we have worshipped. The story of William Tell is one that is fit to be believed and handed down from generation to generation. Voltaire started that fable theory because he did not like the Swiss. Many books have been written on both sides but the old family traditions that have come down to us for 600 years are still as much the faith of the Swiss people as is their religion. William Tell is as much today their national hero and the founder of their republic as Washington is of ours and the little chapel on the lake where he was drowned is still preserved to commemorate him."

Well, whether it is a fact or a fable it is one of the prettiest stories ever told and ought to be repeated to the children of every household. It was in the fourteenth century when Austria had overriden and conquered Switzerland and had stationed her tyrant bailiffs in every canton to subdue and humble the people that one Gessler placed the ducal cap upon a pole in the public place and ordered every one who passed to uncover his head and bow to it. Tell refused and was seized and condemned to death, but as he was known to be the best Bowman in Switzerland he was offered the alternative of shooting an apple from his son's head. The boy was his idol and he begged for some other alternative, but Gessler refused. Sixty yards was measured off, the boy stationed and the apple placed. Gessler and his cohorts looked on while Tell bowed his knees in prayer. Biting his lip and then he then flew the arrow and pierced the apple in its center. The boy ran to his father and leaped into his arms, and another arrow that had been concealed fell upon the ground. "What was that arrow for?" said Gessler. "To shoot you, you brute, had I slain my son." For that he was condemned to prison and Gessler took him in a boat on the lake, but a violent storm came up and Tell was unchained to steer the boat. He made for the shore, leaped for a rock and with a pole shoved the boat back into the stormy waters. Hurrying along the lake he procured a bow and arrows from a countryman and shot Gessler as the boat passed. "Tell's Leap" and "Tell's Rock" are still known to every child in Switzerland. Later on he lost his life while saving a lad from drowning. What is unreasonable about this story? We had a Gessler in Rome at the close of the civil war. His name was de la Mesa, a Spaniard who came over to fight for pay. He did not hoist the ducal cap, but he stretched the flag over the sidewalk and our female Tells (some of whom are living yet) would not walk under it, but crossed over to the other side. Then he stretched another across the whole street and they walked around the block. It was not so much of disrespect to the flag as it was contempt for the foreigner who unfurled it. He refused to let our wives and daughters receive our mail letters unless they came before him and took an ironclad oath of allegiance. He had ten of our young men and several young ladies arrested for acting in a tableau to raise a little money to replace pews in the churches. The pews had all been taken out and made into troughs to feed their horses in. He was forewarned that night by a negro that if he didn't release those girls he would be killed before morning, and he would have been. Yes, "Leopard Spots" were all around here just as they were in North Carolina. We had Gesslers and we had Tells, too.

But I was ruminating about Switzerland, that historical and wonderful country. Now, children and young people, listen. It is only a little scrap of a country about one-fourth the size of Georgia, and nearly half of that is taken up by lakes and mountains. The most beautiful lakes in the world. Lake Lucerne (that's Tell's); Lake Geneva (that's Calvin's); Lake Wener and Wetter—and just think of the grand old mountains—the Alps and the Jura and the Jungfrau. Think of the hospice of the good St. Bernard, where they kept that fine breed of dogs who were trained to go out in the most fearful snow storms and search for lost travelers and carry food and wine to them and bring them safely to the hospice. One of my first books had a picture of two of these noble dogs digging in the snow for a man and feeding him almost dead. One of the dogs had a little bottle strapped around his neck and the other a basket of food. In another picture a little boy was on a dog's back and his

ars around his neck and the dog was barking at the door of the hospice for admission. Those pictures and the stories about them were as dear to me as the story of William Tell.

But think of Little Switzerland, with its population of three million people and all at work except the babies. About half are shepherds and herdsmen on the mountain slopes and benches, raising sheep and milk cows and in the year 1900 they sold over ten million dollars' worth of butter and cheese. Down in the valleys and around the lakes are many towns and little cities that hum like bee hives, for nimble fingers are making watches, jewelry, hair work, lace, silk and cotton fabrics as fine as gossamer and hundreds of other little things which, taken all together, make the commerce of that little water covered and snow capped republic nearly double the commerce of any other country according to population.

All the children from 6 to 12 years have to go to school part of every year, and her young men have to be taught part of two years in military tactics. There is no standing army, but every citizen is a willing and ready soldier to defend his country. Its government is a republic divided into twenty-two cantons or counties, and to maintain this republic they have been fighting all contiguous nations for nearly six hundred years and have whipped every battle they fought Austria, Prussia, Maximilian and at last Bonaparte tried to subdue that people, but failed utterly. They never had an army of over 30,000 and defeated Prussia with 60,000 in seven pitched battles. Austria demanded 20,000 Swiss soldiers to help her fight Turkey. Switzerland refused to furnish them, and that brought on a war, and Switzerland whipped it. We see by the New York papers that they have completed the new government buildings at Berne, and the pictures of them are lovely and the people are proud and had a great festival when they were opened for business. Grand country—great people. John Calvin left his mark upon them, for of all the twenty-two cantons only three have kept allegiance to the Roman Catholic church. But all are devoted Christians, and on every Christmas day and every Easter morn the young men and maidens come tripping down the mountain paths singing their Christmas or Easter carols and making the cliffs and valleys echo with their songs.

But it is said that their young men fight for pay and are mercenary soldiers. Yes, but they choose the side they believe to be right. They would not fight for Austria against the Turks nor would they fight for Bonaparte, nor for England against the Boers. And now the civilized world has let them alone and the little republic has had peace for nearly a hundred years.—Bill Arp, in Atlanta Constitution.

Donned Male Attire.

Daisy Young, 18 years old, was arrested last week in Chicago while arrayed in male attire. The disguise of the young woman was so complete that she had been able to pass as a boy bootblack in a barber shop in South Chicago for four days. She declared that she wished to earn enough money, as a man, to buy a cornet. With the cornet, she said, she could earn money with which to go to Cleveland, Ohio, where a sister lives.

Bate Amendment Cut Out.

Washington, Special.—A special meeting of the House committee on agriculture was held Friday to consider the Appalachian forest reserve bill. After remaining in session half an hour the committee decided to accept the bill in its entirety, as amended by the Senate, with the exception of the Bate amendment. Major Moody was instructed to formulate a report to this effect and the bill will be reported to the House with the omission of this amendment. The bill is thus placed in good shape for passage at the short session.

Telegraphic Briefs.

Wm. Young, for many years a leading grain merchant of Baltimore, died from paralysis. Mr. Young was one of the incorporators of the Baltimore corn and flour exchange, and a member of the chamber of commerce.

A New York dispatch says: "Stockholders of the United States Steel Corporation were to hold a special meeting Monday, to formally ratify the bond conversion plan, but in view of pending litigation the meeting was postponed for two weeks."

A Chicago dispatch says: "Philadelphia Jack O'Brien fought two men and was given the decision over both of them, each bout lasting six rounds with a 20 minute intermission. His first opponent was Jim Driscoll, a local man, without science, but of great strength. Driscoll was staggering at the close of the fight. O'Brien's second man was Jack Beauschoit, of Chicago, a clever fighter. He put up a good fight but O'Brien won easily all the way."

The fellow who makes a fool of himself always seems to enjoy it.

The Sultan of Turkey recently received petitions from the officers in garrisons at Uskub and three adjoining towns setting forth that their pay had failed to materialize for a long time, and that promotion was at a standstill. Abdul Hamid responded by promoting sixty-five officers of the garrison at Przina who had not petitioned.