

## Not a Man

"And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father. Let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father." (Gen. 19:30-36).

This story is so sordid that it is an embarrassment to me to put it in print. Nevertheless, it is the holy word of a holy God, and it is in fact full of most holy and profitable instruction for our souls.

Anyone reading this account will immediately say that Lot's daughters had no morals. They had no character. True enough, but there is something deeper than this. They had no *faith*. This was their *first* lack. Their immoralities flowed from their unbelief. *Faith* would have kept them from such deeds, as it would have kept Eve from eating the forbidden fruit, and as it actually did keep David from slaying Saul. This sordid account is in fact of great use in illustrating the actual relationship between faith and good works. There are a great many who will steadfastly maintain, as a mere matter of orthodox *doctrine*, that all good works must proceed from faith, while they have no notion in the world as to how or why that is so.

It is so, however, and in this sordid account of *sin* we clearly see the workings of *unbelief*.

Understand, Lot's daughters were in a hard place. They were young ladies of marriageable age, with all of the same desires which possess the hearts of all other young ladies, yet they were cut off from the rest of the human race, dwelling in a cave on a mountain, where there was "not a man" to come in unto them after the manner of all the earth. This was hard. "The manner of all the earth" was perfectly legitimate, and unavoidably desirable. These girls had the same desires for marriage and motherhood as all other women had, those desires were implanted in their very natures by their creator, and yet there was "not a man" to fulfill them.

But the plain fact is, it was *God* who had put them in this hard place. It was the call and command of God, and indeed the mercy of God, which required of Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." It was God who had destroyed the men who had been their former acquaintances. It was God who had left them with "not a man" to fulfill their desires.

Faith would have recognized all of this, and looked out of its hard place up to God. It would have looked to the creator of those desires, and to the author of their present hard position, and trusted him—trusted him to bring them out of their hard position, to open their way before them, to provide for their need. If God delayed to do so, faith would have rested in him, and waited patiently for him.

But these girls had no faith. They did not see the hand of God in their plight. Neither did they trust God to provide for their need. Neither could they "wait patiently" for God to alter their circumstances, or provide for them where they were. All this faith would have done. Not so unbelief. Unbelief could not perceive in their late deliverance from the fiery doom of Sodom the sure token that God was for them. As the more enlightened faith of the present dispensation may confidently say, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—so faith in that day would surely have said, He that sent his angels to deliver us from the destruction of Sodom, will he not provide for our needs now that we are delivered?

But unbelief did not look at the goodness nor the power of God, but only at the present difficulty. Unbelief, moreover, after its usual manner, *magnified* that difficulty. As the unbelieving spies in the wilderness called the land that flowed with milk and honey "a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof," and said moreover, "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight *as grasshoppers*, and so we were in their sight," so also the daughters of Lot affirm, "There is *not a man in the earth* to come in unto us." This was certainly false. It was just exaggerating and magnifying the difficulty, after the usual manner of unbelief. If they had said, "There is no man in this cave," that had been true enough, but to their unbelieving hearts "no man in this cave" and "no man in the

earth" were all one. Lacking the eyes of faith, which sees those things which are not seen as yet, they could see no further than their present plight and their present difficulty. Having no faith, they had no hope—for they surely did not expect *God* to work for them. Any expectation of *that* would have kept them from the dark deeds which they committed. Unbelief could not "wait patiently" for that which it had no hope of receiving. It therefore "made haste" to take the matter into its own hands, and provide for itself—and that, as is usual with unbelief, by means of evil deeds.

It is most instructive also to observe how these girls justify their evil deeds. We may be absolutely certain that they did not commit such deeds as this with a clear conscience. Oh, no. If they supposed this thing to be *right*, why did they not simply ask their father for it? Why all of this secrecy and stealth and craft? They knew very well that their deed was evil, and such a deed as they could never have moved their righteous father *knowingly* to commit. But see how they set this evil deed in its best light: "that we may preserve seed of our father." This is always the way of unbelief. To this it is driven by a guilty conscience. So King Saul claimed that the best of the sheep and of the oxen were spared "to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal." (I Sam. 15:21). And so the daughters of Lot commit deeds of darkness "to preserve seed of our father." How pious! how noble! how magnanimous! are sin and unbelief, if we may believe all of their tales.

Yet we may grant that these noble motives may in part be the truth. Men often act with mixed motives. It is the way of sin and unbelief to add some good motive to their evil ones. But what is this worth? Even if we could grant that "to preserve seed of our father" was the *sole* motive of Lot's daughters, still it is evil to do evil that good may come. This is precisely the *way* of unbelief, which has no expectation that God will work his good without the help of our evil.

But we hardly suppose that "to preserve seed of our father" was the sole motive of Lot's daughters. They had a need, and a legitimate one. They had a natural need for motherhood, and a natural need to live "after the manner of all the earth." We suppose it was this need which moved them, as much as any magnanimous desire to preserve seed of their father.

Nor have these girls been alone in their need, nor in the isolation which prevented its fulfillment. Many of the saints of God have occupied the same place of need, and the same position of isolation. Isaac was there, and there by the purpose and appointment of God. It was Abraham's obedience to the call of God which put Isaac there. And what did Isaac do there? He "waited patiently" for God to act. He *might* have "made haste" to take a wife of the daughters of the cursed Canaanites. He *might* have abandoned the high and holy place of separation to which God had called his father, and gotten him such a wife as he could find. Unbelief would surely have done so, but Isaac did none of this. He rather "waited patiently" until God wrought for him. "And Isaac was *forty years old* when he took Rebecca to wife." (Gen. 25:20). This was a long wait. But having waited so long, God wrought in a signal manner to satisfy his heart, and gave him such a marriage that he and his wife were still "sporting" like young lovers after their sons were grown up.

On the other hand, what did Lot's daughters gain by their unbelieving haste? Little indeed, except shame. Lacking the faith to expect it, these girls did not so much as aim at any real or permanent fulfillment of their actual need, but only made haste to *secure what was within their reach*. This is the common way of unbelief, while faith waits on. Many another girl, counting that any man is better than no man, and lacking the faith to receive from God such a husband as she *would*, has made haste to secure such a one as she *could*, without so much as aiming at the real fulfillment of the needs of her heart. For *that* she had no faith. Faith gives a better hope, and hope is content to wait.

And observe, it is the godly who are exposed in a peculiar way to such temptations to make haste. A man's faithfulness to God may make his prospects narrow indeed. None of the Canaanites must deal with the solitary isolation which was Isaac's lot for forty years. The flock of God has always been a little flock, and while the men of the world may fish in the wide sea, the faithful are confined to a narrow pond. In such a plight their temptations are strong to give up faith and patience, and "make haste" to do wrong. Not that any of the godly would ever stoop to the base deeds of Lot's daughters. No, but many of them have done evil in a lesser degree. Finding "not a man," or none to their taste, in the little flock in which their lot is cast, they "make haste" to yoke themselves together with an unbeliever—or with a believer who is not to their taste.

It may be said that in the latter case they wrong only themselves. If that were so, still this would be a work of unbelief, which cannot be pleasing to God. But it is not true that they wrong only themselves. They wrong their children also, by bringing them into a home which can never be so happy or congenial as it ought to be. They wrong their God also, for in depriving themselves of that tranquility of heart and that rest of spirit which a proper match would give them, they so far hinder their own usefulness in the cause of their

God. "Better half hanged than ill wed" is a true proverb, and by making haste to secure a mismatch, a man only secures the continuance of those temptations and distractions from which marriage is designed to free him—and he may add in the bargain other troubles to which he was a stranger before. Surely this is wronging his God as well as himself. The *fruits* of unbelief are evil as well as its deeds.

Jacob and Esau both found themselves in the same isolated position as Isaac had occupied before them. But the call of God mattered little to Esau, and he may therefore have two wives while Jacob had not even a prospect. But what sort of wives did Esau have? "And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebecca." (Gen. 26:34-35). "And Rebecca said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" (Gen. 27:46).

Observe now, Esau had married these daughters of the land when he was forty years old. Evidently his early training had exercised a long restraint upon him, but lacking faith, his patience ran out, and he married such as he pleased, while Jacob, who was of the same age, waited on. "And it came to pass that when Isaac was old," (Gen. 27:1), Jacob had yet no wife, and yet no prospects. Many a true saint of God has been there, who had rather pine unsatisfied than turn aside from the place of separation to which God has called them. The flock of God is a little one, and in many times and places it may be little indeed. I once preached in a little church in a little town, in which church the young people consisted of three girls and one boy—and the boy the brother of one of the girls, and the cousin of the other two. Who were these to marry? They had need of "faith and patience." Alas, one of the girls (at the age of sixteen!) married an ungodly man. This was making haste indeed, doubtless against her own conscience, and certainly against my plain teaching.

Missionaries, and especially the children of missionaries, have often been placed in the same position of practical isolation. Their place is a hard one, and their temptations may be strong, and missionaries have not always resisted those temptations. Some have married the idolaters which they went to convert.

The *converts* on many mission fields have necessarily faced the same difficulty. The converts of any mission are few at first, and the flock of course a little one. In numerating the many things which hindered people from receiving the gospel in India, one missionary says, "The prospect of marrying their children is dark. They cannot marry them among their own caste [after they have lost caste by embracing the gospel], for no one would unite with them; no other caste will marry with them, and they are not sufficiently numerous of themselves to form marriages. ... Some defer their baptism till they have married their children, and have then left them with their idolatrous partners." <sup>5</sup> Such a course is deplorable indeed, and hardly excusable. Such difficulties are not to be met by *compromise*, but by *faith*, and doubtless also by "faith and patience."

Ruth faced the same difficulty, and not for her children, but for herself. Naomi pressed her with this very thing, that if she left Moab for Israel, she would have none to marry her. But Ruth was determined and steadfast, and where many have left the place of duty and of blessing in order to marry, Ruth embraced that very place, even in the face of the likelihood that none would marry her. But the event proved better than Naomi's fears, for in spite of all probabilities, there is a God in heaven who rewards faith and faithfulness. The saints of God are often placed—by duty, by faith, and by faithfulness—in the same isolated position in which Lot's daughters found themselves, with "not a man"—or not a woman—to marry them. Let them rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Let them *wrestle* with him if they must, but let them by all means remain on the ground of faith.

Some are privileged to find themselves in a larger flock. When I was a student at Bible school, the place was known as the "happy hunting ground." Yet many failed even there to find a suitable mate, and those who neared the end of their final year, and were still unattached, commonly came down with what was known as "senior panic," a disorder which moved them to "make haste" to marry, not what they *would*, nor necessarily what they *ought*, but what they *could*. "Faith and patience" would have led them in another direction. *Faith* does not *panic*, but rests in the Lord, and waits patiently for him. Faith deters men (and women) from *haste* as well as it does from every compromise, and from every departure from the narrow path. Faith can procure the desired blessing without any compromise or any departure from the strictest righteousness. Faith is in fact the greatest need of every man who has any other need.

God knows how to reward faithfulness, and I have seen some signal examples of God's provision of a mate, when his child has steadfastly remained in the path of duty and blessing, though there were no prospects there. It is God who says, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thine

heart.” Those who delight themselves in the Lord, and cleave to his paths and his ways, will find his promise true, though they may have to wait patiently for it. Those who depart from his ways in order to secure the desire of their hearts will often find themselves disappointed even in that. Lot's daughters had no faith, and as a matter of plain fact they altogether failed to secure any real fulfillment of their needs, in spite of their scheming and grasping for what was within their reach.